



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT



Torbay Council

Creating better Masterplans for everybody

One of our priorities is to improve our relationship with local people and communities. In our [Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy](#) our mission is to be a Council that works with its residents, communities and partnerships, becoming a Council that supports, enables and empowers. This case study is an example of how we are changing the way we engage to support this.

Due to climate change, and the need to protect our residents and businesses from flooding, in December 2020 we consulted on proposals for new sea defences in Paignton, one of the three towns that make up Torbay. It was clear from the feedback we received that our residents wanted us to look at more than just providing a sea defence wall. Our residents and local community wanted to be more involved in how the scheme will look, work and benefit everyone. Because of this feedback, in May 2021 the decision was taken to pause moving forward with the original scheme.

Our residents generally accepted that a coastal sea defence scheme was undoubtedly needed for this seafront area because of the issues of climate change and sea-level rise. We agreed to develop a revised approach to our community engagement. It would now be a collaborative process with the aim to develop a scheme that is right for the residents, local community and businesses of Paignton. We knew it would be important that any revised scheme needed to have broad community support but also, and importantly, would deliver the required protection to as many properties and businesses as possible.

In February 2022 the Council commissioned an independent design consultancy, LDA Design, to work on this revised community engagement exercise. Together we carried out a more collaborative public engagement and consultation process. It involved talking to as many

people as possible that would be impacted by the changes and help us to co-design a new Paignton and Preston Seafront Masterplan. This would include the appropriate sea defence infrastructure, along with improvements to the wider public realm.

The key objectives for this new Masterplan were to:

- protect and improve the precious open spaces along the seafront
- create a happy, healthy, and vibrant place, and;
- celebrate the special qualities of our seafront areas.

What followed was a three phased engagement programme.



Engagement tent ready to go at English Riviera's Airshow

Phase one - understand existing situation, what people liked and didn't like about the seafront areas.

Phase two - firm up the vision and principles following the feedback from phase one. This led to two options being produced for people to look at and provide comment on.

Phase three - incorporated all the feedback from phase two and presented one final masterplan option to be reviewed.

During each phase online consultation was run as well as holding focus groups and workshops with those that would be affected. The groups we spoke to, either at face-to-face workshops or through virtual meetings, included:

- businesses that were based on or around the seafront areas
- event organisers – this space is one of the main event spaces in Torbay
- hospitality sector

- Mencap
- local disabled groups
- over 50's Forum
- students at the local college
- Community Partnership
- Ward Councillors
- a range of council teams including Active Travel, Community Safety, SWISCo (who look after our green spaces), Harbours, Parking etc.

While monitoring the online responses we noticed we were receiving feedback mainly from residents aged over 50. These seafront areas are used by everyone in the community, and we wanted to make sure that we heard from as much of a wide range of residents as possible. We knew we needed to be where our families and young people would be.

During phases two and three we hired stalls at two very popular events that took place right on the seafront that this masterplan was for. At these events we spoke to and engaged with just under 600 residents, which included importantly families, younger people, visitors and business owners.



One of three workshops held for local businesses

Co-producing and engaging this way meant that when we reached the end of phase three, asking if the final design that had been co-produced was a positive step forward, 91% of those who took part responded that they thought it was.

Feedback we received during phase three included “big improvement over the previous designs” and “a great step forward”.

The Masterplan has now been approved by our Cabinet and work will start on the planning application for the sea defence part of the masterplan.

Feedback from our residents, community and businesses on this way of engaging has been very positive. So much so it has been agreed that this model of engagement, co-producing with our residents and local community from the start, is the best way forward for similar larger projects across Torbay. As a Council we will also continue to encourage all Council teams to look at how they can use aspects of this way of engaging, ensuring the right audiences are having the opportunity to let us know what is right for them.



How Paignton Seafront will look after receiving 90% support from local residents and businesses

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