

ILFRACOMBE CULTURAL PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a huge role in the life of Ilfracombe in many different ways. It brings entertainment and joy, whether that be live performances at the Landmark or a night of music at Sax on the Beach. It helps express who we are, from our amazing visual arts highlighted every year at Ilfracombe Art Trail to community theatre shows at the SPACE. It reminds us of where we come from through our broad range of historic buildings and Ilfracombe Museum. It helps drive and diversify our tourism economy through attractions like Verity and festivals like the Sea Ilfracombe Maritime Festival, as well as our wider economy through the creative industries. Most importantly, it supports our development and wellbeing, inspiring young people to explore their curiosity and potential, connecting people to the amazing nature that surrounds us and bringing people together who may be at risk of loneliness or isolation.

Culture can achieve many things, but it requires investment and collaboration to sustain it and allow it to flourish. It is for this reason that the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan has been commissioned. Building on the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy and developed in collaboration with 35 cultural and community partners, it identifies key themes that underpin the cultural life and identity of Ilfracombe, the opportunities for how culture can address important needs of our town and communities, and the barriers that need to be addressed to achieve this. It turns these into a vision for culture in Ilfracombe and a spatial plan of projects across the town with defined actions for achieving them in the coming years that can focus investment, partnership-working and community action.

PRIORITIES OF THE CULTURAL PLAN

The plan seeks to address 5 core needs; Protect Our Wellbeing, Be Custodians of Heritage, Amplify Our Youth, Celebrate Our Environment, and Supercharge Our Economy. These are supported by 5 assets that are key to a flourishing culture in Ilfracombe; the Community Vigour of our strong culture of volunteering, community organisations and independent businesses; the rich creativity of the Cultural Cluster of artists and cultural organisations we have; the Force of Nature of our landscape, sea and wild surroundings; Our Riveting History; and our strong reputation as a Visitor Destination.

Together these needs and assets form a framework that have been used to identify projects across 5 character areas of the town, ensuring the impacts of culture are felt everywhere across Ilfracombe, not just in one or two places. They include; The Historic Spine running through Fore Street and the High Street; The Promenade; The Maritime Gem of our harbour and quayside; The Wild Surrounds of trails, parks, beaches and hills around Ilfracombe; and the residential communities that define culture On Our Doorstep.

4 key projects are identified within each character area along with 4 town-wide projects which cut across the whole of Ilfracombe, providing a holistic and ambitious blueprint for culture across the town from supporting key cultural assets, to public realm enhancements, community-led activities to town-wide cultural branding and marketing.

TURN IDEAS INTO ACTIONS

These projects have been linked together into a 10-step action plan which provides focus on short, medium and long term actions to be taken, along with the resource and impact implications of each. These include:

1. Form an Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture and identify a Culture Lead to drive and support a cohesive and collaborative cultural offer for Ilfracombe
2. Celebrate the rich cultural offer of Ilfracombe via strategic comms planning, creative marketing and collaborative cross promotion
3. Enhance the built environment and public realm, utilising cultural interventions, community collaboration and policy
4. Animate the High Street and Promenade using vacant spaces to commission creative displays, pop-up cultural events and community meanwhile use
5. Enhance Ilfracombe's cultural identity through the delivery of new cultural events and public art whilst actively supporting the town's current creative offer
6. Support the diversification of the evening and night time economy by commissioning cultural programming that aims to extend the season, improve perception and increase safety
7. Support the sustainable re-location of Ilfracombe Museum

8. Support young people in Ilfracombe to access cultural activity and education, developing opportunities to progress in the creative industries

9. Embed shared decision making into cultural programming in Ilfracombe

10. Attract external funding, centralise resources and collect and apply learning to maximise the impact of culture in Ilfracombe

ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM

Additional consideration has been given to Ilfracombe Museum given uncertainty surrounding its current premises and the need to identify feasible proposals for its medium and long term future. Workshops with key museum stakeholders allied with surveys of local opinion have been used to shape a vision for the role the museum will play in the cultural life of Ilfracombe, emphasising its engagement with local communities to form a distinctive home of Ilfracombe stories that is meaningful to locals and visitors alike.



RESEARCH & INSIGHT SUMMARY

The Ilfracombe Cultural Plan has been underpinned by a detailed research process that has drawn from a number of sources, including:

- Existing policy and strategic context of the town
- Major initiatives and funding opportunities within the town
- Review of the town's physical and intangible history and heritage
- Analysis of economic, social and cultural data including investment, participation and social needs
- Engagement with stakeholders across arts, 18h economy, leisure and green spaces, education, heritage and economic development

This research has been summarised into six key themes, identified as defining features of the town that carry particular importance for its identity, cultural potential and social challenges and opportunities. A detailed summary of this research can be found in the appendices. The six themes include:

LANDSCAPE, ADVENTURE AND THE SEA

From its origins in the time of the Dumnonii Celts, the character and culture of Ilfracombe has been shaped by the fortunes of its relationship with a landscape and sea more wild and dramatic than most places in the UK. The cliffs of the Torrs, the sleeping elephant of Hillsborough, Lantern Hill, Compass Torr and Capstone Hill form an awe-inspiring setting. When combined with one of the largest tidal ranges in the world, it is hard to think of a coastal location in Britain that better showcases the powerful forces of nature. Today Ilfracombe has much to offer for those who want to experience a more dramatic and dynamic engagement with nature and the sea, from watersports to coastal walks to engaging in the rich maritime heritage that has left its mark on the town and its cultural identity.

TOURISM

For centuries Ilfracombe has been synonymous with seaside tourism, from the Georgian upper classes seeking a health boost, to Victorian pleasure seekers, to the ferry, train and coach tours of the 20th century. Despite experiencing a decline in tourism in the latter half of the 20th century, today tourism remains the heart of the Ilfracombe economy, linking to 22.5% of employment and 40% of businesses. Its social and economic prospects are often linked to this and creating a visitor offer that is distinctive, diverse and attracts people year round is central to supporting its economy. The rich tourism heritage is something the town can dip into to differentiate from other coastal areas, whilst also embracing new opportunities like adventure sports, biodiversity and a strong contemporary arts culture.

A CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL CLUSTER

The 20.25m Damien Hirst sculpture 'Verity' in Ilfracombe Harbour is a symbol of a diverse, contemporary cultural scene in Ilfracombe that includes 15 galleries and visual arts spaces, an annual art trail featuring 70 local artists, a vibrant street art scene and rich theatre and performing arts offer centred around the Landmark Theatre. Almost a third of local students take Art and Design subjects at GCSE meaning there is a pipeline of new creatives constantly moving through the town.

COMMUNITY AND COMBATING ISOLATION

One of the fundamental roles of art and culture in society is its power to bring people together, create a strong sense of community and improve people's wellbeing through a sense of purpose and reducing loneliness. There is strong evidence of this happening within Ilfracombe with a range of volunteer-led cultural classes, community arts

groups and festivals. Affordable, community-led cultural spaces such as the SPACE are vital to enabling this. Within a town where people face significant risks of social isolation and mental health issues the importance of this cannot be overestimated. This includes high levels of elderly living alone, people caring for family, residents of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) and people with mental and physical health challenges.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND OPPORTUNITY

Whilst under 19's make up just 20% of the local population, compared with 23% nationally, they have an outsized role in the future of the town both economically and culturally. The working age population of Ilfracombe in 2021 was 55.2%, lower than the national average of 58.5% and has reduced since 2011. Numbers of residents in the 20 to 35 age range are particularly low, representing a long term threat to the economic resilience of the town. Ilfracombe has many of the ingredients to be a great place to grow up. The outdoor lifestyle including watersports, surf and skate culture, contemporary art scene, and community identity all provide the basis for a good childhood and youth. However, the town experiences several challenges which undermine this including child poverty, low educational attainment and perceptions about a lack of long-term opportunities for young people who stay in the area.

A CONNECTED TOWN EXPERIENCE

Ilfracombe has a number of gems, including its harbour, its natural surroundings and its seafront, all of which have been the focus of regeneration plans and activity in recent decades. However, there is a broader need to knit together and support the uplift of the whole town. This includes key locations like the High Street which, like most UK towns, has faced challenges in recent years leading to negative perceptions created by empty shops and derelict development sites. There is a wealth of opportunities within Ilfracombe to leverage culture for 'soft regeneration' from its strong visual arts scene, to organisations such as Ilfracombe Museum seeking long term sustainable locations through to community and cultural festivals.

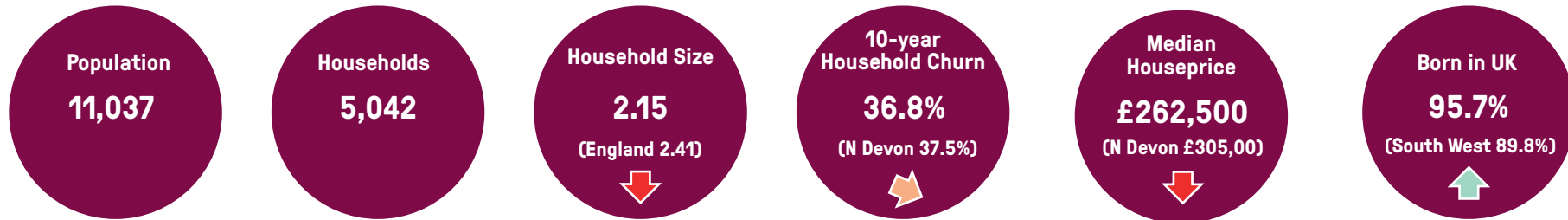


Image Credit: Charmain Lovett, One Ilfracombe

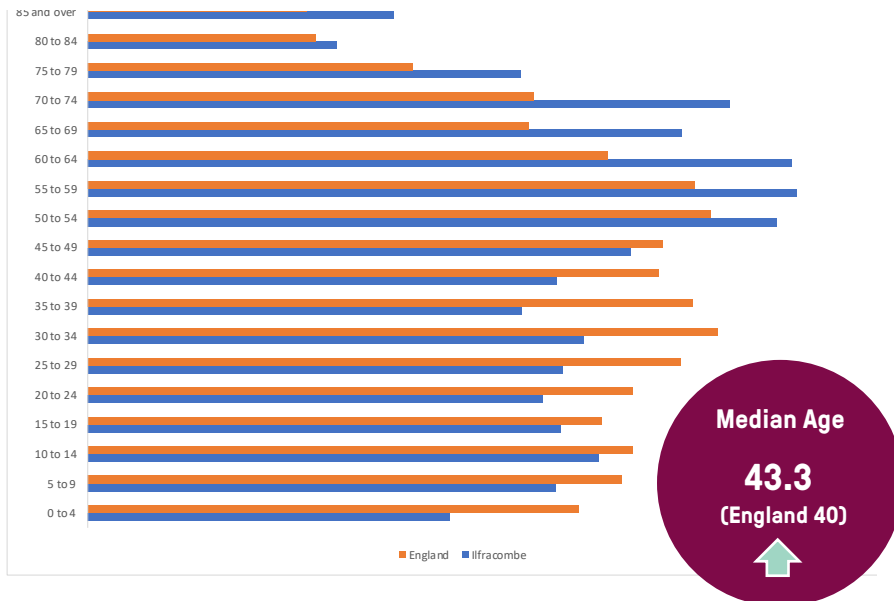
CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY

The Ilfracombe Cultural Plan needs to be considered in relation to the underlying social and economic needs and opportunities of the town as well as its cultural potential. Culture has the power to deliver wider social and economic benefits to Ilfracombe, and communicating these to stakeholders outside the cultural sector is vital to embedding and aligning cultural development across activity in the town. Below we outline some of the key challenges and opportunities identified through our baseline data review and policy analysis that will underpin the direction of the Cultural Plan.

PEOPLE & COMMUNITY



Age Profile



Mosaic Group

Rural Reality - 45.2%

Households living in affordable properties in village and countryside settings

Country Living - 15.1%

Well-off homeowners owners in rural areas enjoying the benefits of country life

Transient Renters - 10.6%

Single people renting low cost homes for the short term.

Rental Hubs - 7.6%

Singles renting affordable private flats further away from central amenities

Senior Security - 6.3%

Elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement.

Family Basics - 6.0%

Households bringing up children, who have limited incomes and budget carefully

Vintage Value - 5.9%

Elderly people with limited pension income, mostly living alone

Ageing Population - Ilfracombe is experiencing a falling population with particular reductions in its working-age population and the 20 to 35 age bracket.

Deprivation - 3 of Ilfracombe's 8 Lower Super Output Area's (small areas of 1,000 - 2,000 people used for national statistics) are in the 20% most deprived in the country with high levels of poor housing drawing in residents from outside the town with social and health issues.

Health and Wellbeing - In Ilfracombe Central Ward the life expectancy at birth is just 71 for men and 79 for women compared with the national level of 78 years for men and 83 years for women. 'Healthy Life Expectancy' at birth is particularly poor for men at just 54 years meaning they can expect to have 9 fewer years of life in good health than the national average.

Stable Community Foundation - Ilfracombe has a relatively stable community with houses changing hands less frequently and large numbers of demographically similar people. This suggests that there is a very good possibility for strong community bonds, evidenced by an encouraging number of voluntary groups and community organisations.



THE ECONOMY



Occupations



Key Industries

- C: Manufacturing - 25.4%
- I: Accommodation & Food Services - 17.8%
- N: Administrative & Support Services - 12.7%
- Q: Human Health and Social Work - 11.4%
- P: Education - 6.4%
- F: Construction - 3.2%
- M: Profession, Scientific and Technical - 3.2%
- R: Arts, Entertainment & Recreation - 1.9%

Lack of Good Work - Median wages are lower than average and lead to lower net incomes after housing costs. Employment is also disproportionately seasonal and part-time due to the size of the tourism sector in particular.

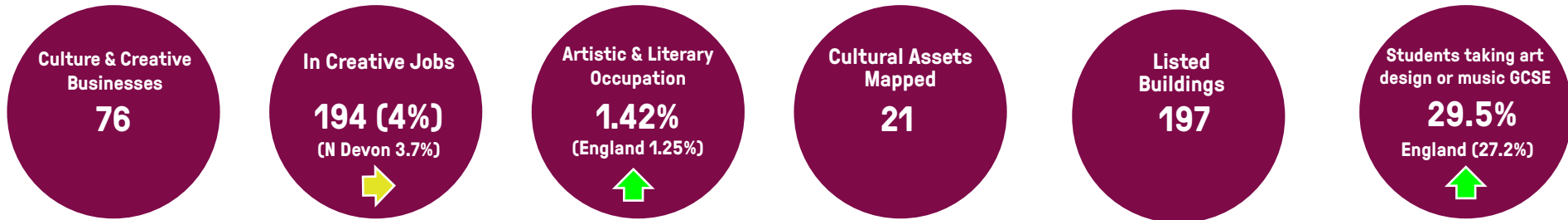
Skills and Workforce Strength - The combination of lower levels of education amongst the population, a shrinking working age population and a small catchment area for labour means that skill shortages are likely and attracting businesses to the town is more challenging.

Rising Employment - Despite the above challenges Ilfracombe has seen overall employment growth in the last few years at a rate higher than comparator areas, helping reduce the overall high levels of out-commuting from the town.

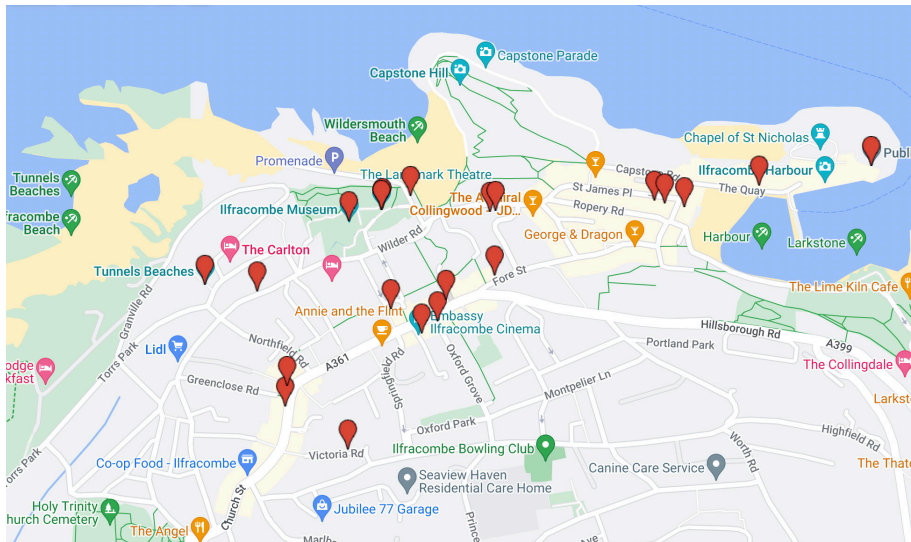
Rise of Remote Working - Currently the level of people working from home in Ilfracombe is relatively low at just 20% compared with 32% nationally. The rise in home-working since the Covid-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to attract more remote knowledge workers to the town, however, this will likely require improvements to the broadband infrastructure with current average internet speeds broadly between 45 - 62 Mbps, half the average speeds in other parts of the country.



CULTURE & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



Cultural Infrastructure



Audience Profile

Trips & Treats - 31.3%

Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends

Up Our Street - 22.5%

Sociable retirees looking for inexpensive, mainstream, local leisure opportunities

Dormitory Dependables - 14.4%

Suburbanites and small towners interested in heritage activities and mainstream arts

Frontline Families - 6.4%

Frugal, semi-urban renting families, light on arts and culture but heavy on community

Home and Heritage - 5.2%

Rural and small town pensioners attracted to daytime activities and historical content

Commuterland Culturebuffs - 3.3%

Affluent, professional and suburbanite keen consumers of traditional culture.

Experience Seekers - 2.7%

Highly active, diverse, social and ambitious regular and eclectic arts engagers

Creative Workforce - There are larger than average numbers of people working in 'creative jobs' with levels of people in artistic and literary occupations particularly high. Levels of students studying art and design subjects at GCSE and A-Level are also significantly higher than average.

Undersized Creative Industries - Despite its creative workforce, the creative industries sector is notably small in the town, representing just 1.13% of total employment compared to 4.74% in England. Employment in the film, media and production sector is higher than expected for North Devon and potentially offers an opportunity area for growing the creative sector.

Cultural Infrastructure and Funding - Ilfracombe is fortunate to have the presence of an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) that has invested significantly in the town in the form of Landmark Theatres. However, despite a significant number of artists, galleries and grassroots arts organisations there is little evidence of cultural funding to freelance and small-scale artists coming into the town.

Promising Audience Profile - The audience segments used by national audience analysis company The Audience Agency suggest a high proportion of people in Ilfracombe who prefer to enjoy and benefit from cultural activities locally. Many of these are also at the typically mid-to-lower engagement levels in culture that are most attractive to cultural funders.



VISION

Known for its picturesque views, iconic architecture and captivating history, Ilfracombe is the hidden gem of North Devon, oozing intrigue and drama from every crevice of its bold and dynamic landscape. It is proud and free-spirited, absorbing both the ferocious power and calming influence of the ocean it steadfastly watches over.

Like the scenery that surrounds it, Ilfracombe is a force of nature; robust and resilient. Adventure runs through its DNA, creating the perfect habitat for modern-day explorers, who seek out curious, coastal charm in an increasingly homogenised world.

Culture in Ilfracombe works hard for the community, bringing people together and combating social isolation through diverse and accessible programming. It provides a conduit to celebrate Ilfracombe's fascinating heritage, safeguarding the town's unique history for years to come, whilst actively promoting care and understanding for the environment. Culture empowers the youth, helping to unlock their potential to shape the future of Ilfracombe, actively contributing to a thriving economy that supports the growth of tourism and creates opportunities for people to build sustainable, creative careers in the place they call home.

CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Q&As

WHAT IS THE ILFRACOMBE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK?

The Ilfracombe Cultural Framework is a tool with which town stakeholders can identify and prioritise key cultural projects within the town. The framework can also be used to assess the wider cultural offer of Ilfracombe in the round, identifying areas of focus, growth and development.

HOW DOES THE ILFRACOMBE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK WORK?

The Ilfracombe Cultural Framework cross references the core needs of the town against its core assets, creating a matrix of opportunity. By populating the framework with key projects and project ideas, it is possible to identify how individual projects can most effectively contribute to the wider needs of Ilfracombe, whilst ensuring that a strong, cohesive cultural offer is developed.

HOW WAS THE ILFRACOMBE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED?

The Ilfracombe Cultural Framework was developed in collaboration with over 20 town stakeholders at the Ilfracombe Stakeholder Visioning Workshops held in October and November 2023. The framework is designed to evolve over time as the needs and assets of Ilfracombe change and evolve. The framework should be revisited and used as a tool to curate a cohesive cultural offer within Ilfracombe.

WHAT ARE THE CORE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE CURRENT ILFRACOMBE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK?

Protect Our Wellbeing - We want to make Ilfracombe a place where culture brings people together in a meaningful way, combating the effects of social isolation and poor mental health.

Custodians of Heritage - We want Ilfracombe to be a place that cherishes its heritage, embracing its rich history. We aim for culture to support us in proudly safeguarding our heritage; celebrating our past while caring for our present.

Amplify Our Youth - We want Ilfracombe to be a place where the voices and talents of young people are not only acknowledged but actively encouraged. We aim to empower our youth, unlocking their creative potential to shape the future of Ilfracombe with a genuine sense of ownership and agency.

Celebrate Our Environment - Ilfracombe is already facing the effects of the degradation of our environment. We want culture to actively promote care and understanding of our environment, acting as a catalyst for behavioural change and education.

Supercharge Our Economy - We want Ilfracombe to be a place where culture helps to lower deprivation levels by contributing to a thriving, year-round economy, by supporting the growth of tourism whilst creating opportunities for local people to build sustainable, creative careers.

WHAT ARE THE CORE ASSETS IDENTIFIED IN THE CURRENT ILFRACOMBE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK?

Community Vigour - Ilfracombe is defined by a community with a desire to thrive. Our strong culture of volunteering, community organisations, independent businesses, artists and makers who are invested in Ilfracombe, create a brave and independent force for change.

Cultural Cluster - Our rich local scene of artists, galleries, community groups and The Landmark Theatre, alongside 'Verity' a daring example of British contemporary public art, gives us a thriving cultural cluster and a strong foundation for future cultural development.

Force of Nature - An awe-inspiring setting with one of the largest tidal ranges in the world, Ilfracombe's coast and surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty showcase Britain's most powerful forces of nature, providing a unique attraction to visitors and locals alike.

Our Riveting History - From intrepid explorers to iconic architecture, Ilfracombe has a history that is still very much present within the town today. Heritage buildings, carved landscapes and a wealth of intriguing tales define Ilfracombe as we know it.

Visitor Destination - Ilfracombe has been a well-loved tourist destination since the 19th Century, making it synonymous with the British seaside holiday. Our attractions and infrastructure give us plenty to attract visitors if leveraged for the 21st century tourist.



Ifracombe Cultural Framework

	Community Vigour	Cultural Cluster	Force of Nature	Our Riveting History	Visitor Destination
<p>Protect Our Wellbeing</p> <p>We want to make Ifracombe a place where culture brings people together in a meaningful way, combatting the effects of social isolation and poor mental health</p>	<p>Ifracombe Walking Group The Lantern The Ifracombe Centre Ifracombe Warm Spaces Belle's Place Ifracombe Table Tennis Ifracombe Bowling Club Ifracombe Rugby Football Club Community Connector</p>	<p>Brush and Breathe Ifracombe Art and Craft Society The SPACE Studio Theatre Ifracombe</p>	<p>RNLI Ifracombe Sea School IDEA: Walking Festival IDEA: Mindfulness classes and yoga in nature Coastal Swim Coaching</p>	<p>Ifracombe Museum: Old Codgers & Crafty Ladies IDEA: Ifracombe Museum (scope for increasing activities with targeted groups if workshop space is available)</p>	<p>Ifracombe Swimming Pool Biccelscombe Park St. James Park Carin Nature Reserve</p>
<p>Custodians of Heritage</p> <p>We want Ifracombe to be a place that cherishes its heritage, embracing its rich history. We aim for culture to be support us in proudly safeguarding our heritage; celebrating our past while caring for our present</p>	<p>The Lantern IBAC Ifracombe Buildings Appreciation Collective Ifracombe Victorian and Steampunk Celebration</p>		<p>National Trust - Walk the Ifracombe Torns A Guided Walk in Ifracombe, Beaford Arts</p>	<p>St Nicholas Chapel and Lighthouse Devon Ghost Tours Red Petticoats Ifracombe Fish Trails Ifracombe Holy Trinity Graveyard Group</p>	<p>Ifracombe Museum Relocation: a more visible destination Pip & Jim's West Wall Revival Project</p>
<p>Amplify Our Youth</p> <p>We want Ifracombe to be a place where the voices and talents of young people are not only acknowledged but actively encouraged. We aim to empower our youth, unlocking their creative potential to shape the future of Ifracombe with a genuine sense of ownership and agency.</p>	<p>Scouts Adventure Groups Delta Youth Centre</p>	<p>The Landmark Creative Learning programme Small Pond Productions Inspired Minds</p>	<p>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Finding Nature's Footprints The Forest School at Combe Martin Y Sail</p>	<p>IDEA: Ifracombe Museum (Saturday clubs and young curator opportunities, including exhibitions if appropriate space is available)</p>	<p>Water sports packages for schools and youth groups Ifracombe Skatepark IDEA: Indoor Climbing Centre</p>
<p>Celebrate Our Environment</p> <p>Ifracombe is already facing the effects of the degradation of our environment. We want culture to actively promote care and understanding of our environment, acting as a catalyst for behavioural change and education.</p>	<p>Extreme Beach Cleaning Cairn Conservation Carers Hillsborough Volunteer Group Cow Green Volunteers Sea Ifracombe Maritime Festival</p>	<p>Earth Repair Shop</p>	<p>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Bio Blitz Ifracombe Sea Safari Wildersmouth Beach Tunnels Beach Where To Begin? Beaford Arts and Multi Story IDEA: Dark Skies Event IDEA: Food Foraging</p>	<p>IDEA: Ifracombe Museum (Using Natural History collections to collaborate with the new GCSE Natural History, encouraging digital collecting of environmental data)</p>	<p>Wildlife Cruises</p>
<p>Supercharge Our Economy</p> <p>We want Ifracombe to be a place where culture helps to lower deprivation levels by contributing to a thriving, year-round economy, by supporting the growth of tourism whilst creating opportunities for local people to build sustainable, creative careers.</p>	<p>Jack in the Green Celebration Ifracombe Beer Fest Ifracombe Carnival All Things Morris Ifracombe Advent Calendar Ifracombe Pilot Gig Club Regatta Round Lundy Yacht Race St Phillip & St James Flower Festival Ifracombe Bike Show Spooks and Sparks</p>	<p>Verity by Damien Hirst Ifracombe Art Trail Embassy Cinema Doodles Gallery Jessica Dove Gallery Montpellier Gallery Magenta Fine Art Gallery Silk Crystal Runnymede Bandstand</p>	<p>Ifracombe Four Peak Challenge Tarka Trail South West Coast Path</p>	<p>IDEA: Ifracombe Museum (Family history tourism and international reach through enhanced social media and digital access to archives)</p>	<p>E-Watersports Watersports Hen/Stag Parties Team Building - Woods and Water Coastal Cooking Courses Deep Sea Fishing and Cruises Scuba Diving Annie and the Flint George and the Dragon Pub Quiz Nights</p>

CULTURAL CHARACTER AREAS

INTRODUCTION

It is important that the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan not only provides a roadmap of projects and priorities for the town to develop its cultural sector, but it also needs to be woven into the development of the town itself supporting placemaking and the physical evolution of the town.

The spatial vision for Ilfracombe set out in the North Devon and Torrington Local Plan includes anticipated population growth including the southern extension to the town; community-driven regeneration of the town centre; and enhancement of the harbour and seafront that capitalises on the built heritage, cultural assets, open space and key habitats in and surrounding the town.

This spatial vision has been taken into account and developed through a cultural lens to define five Cultural Character Areas for Ilfracombe. These are based on an assessment of the particular cultural assets, characteristics, functions and strategic roles of different areas within the wider town. Consideration for the cultural needs and opportunities of each area, alongside an understanding of how they contribute to the overarching needs of the town will help focus priorities not only in cultural programming but aid the integration of culture into town planning, development and placemaking.

1. Historic Spine

The main stretch of retail, leisure and community uses within Ilfracombe running from the Harbour to the connection with Wilder Road

2. Promenade

The leisure and experience focal point of the town including the Landmark Theatre, Wildersmouth Beach and the spectacular views of Capstone Hill.

3. Maritime Gem

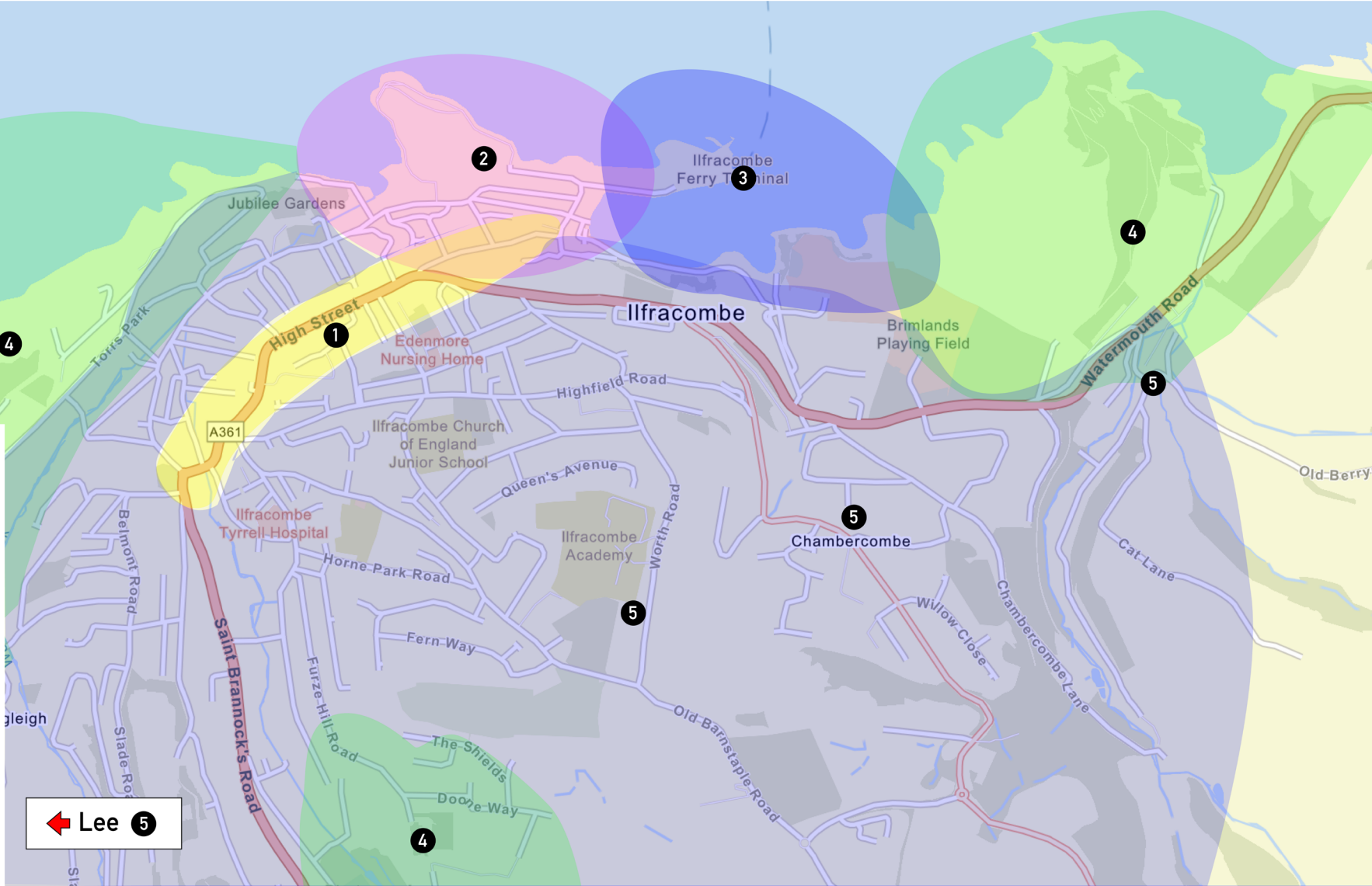
The working harbour of Ilfracombe where the famous Verity statue stands amidst the boats overlooked by St Nicholas Chapel

4. Wild Surrounds

The coastal and natural areas that encompass the town from the Torrs and Hillsborough to Cairn Nature Reserve.

5. On Our Doorstep

The various residential neighbourhoods of the town including schools, local parks and playing fields



CULTURAL MAPPING

A Cultural Audit Map developed by Things Made Public highlights the diversity and geographic spread of formal and informal infrastructure that can support a rich cultural life within Ilfracombe. The full interactive map also includes details of registered creative industry businesses, locations of listed buildings and details of vacant buildings that might offer potential sites for new cultural infrastructure as of October 2023.

The full interactive map can be accessed at:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/instance/interactivelegend/index.html?appid=44b49f78dc3e40e19c0d2e0a02137eb0>

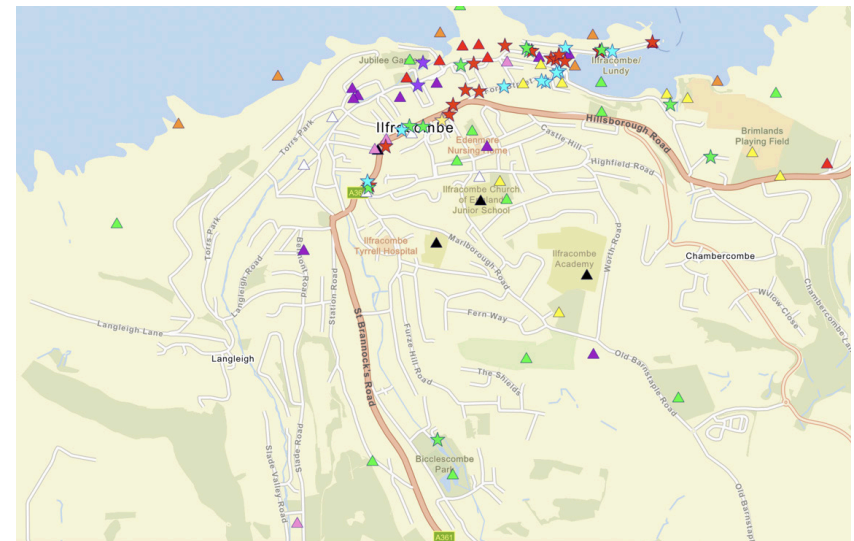
The following map highlights the Arts & Culture and Community, Nature & Tourism layers of the map which includes:

Arts and Culture

- 16 Galleries, studios or community spaces linked to visual arts
- 6 Museums and visitor attractions
- 2 Theatres and performing arts centres
- 1 Cinema
- 11 Independent cafes known to programme community or cultural activities
- 9 Bars or pubs known to programme live music events

Community Nature & Tourism

- 4 Community centres, halls and civic information centres
- 9 Sport, social or community clubs
- 7 Public artworks or public realm points of interest
- 13 Parks, community green spaces or nature reserves
- 10 Major hotels and holiday parks
- 6 Beaches
- 5 Places of worship
- 4 Schools





TOWN WIDE CONSIDERATIONS

CELEBRATING CURIOUS COASTAL CHARM

Ilfracombe already has a lot to shout about, from its dramatic cliffs, coves and trails, to its fascinating heritage and historic buildings and distinctive cultural venues. Ilfracombe also has a lot to offer that is currently flying under the radar.

The town's website, Visit Ilfracombe currently provides a good focal point of information about what is going on in the area, including a fantastically extensive directory of local businesses and activities. However, there is little celebration within the public realm of the fact that such a small town is able to boast all of this activity and history. As such it feels at times like there is a disconnect between people's perceptions and the reality of the town. Particularly when it comes to areas like the High Street.

Looking to bring back a sense of celebration of what the town is and what it has to offer should be a key priority. Whether it is championing independent business owners in the High Street through window displays, to the celebration of neighbourhood identities via street decorations, there is an important space for bringing out stories and shouting about them both online and in the public realm.

Longer term consideration should be given to the development of an Ilfracombe cultural brand and marketing strategy that builds on the broader 'Curious Coastal Charm' brand of Ilfracombe tourism. This should give a platform from which to celebrate the town's rich heritage, promote the excellent work of the cultural sector, the independent arts offer of the town and raise awareness of the diverse cultural offer that can contribute to community wellbeing.

Alongside an improved marketing profile, commissioning interventions that bring a more distinctive visual identity to the town, potentially linked with key themes outlined in the research summary or design features such as the town's Victorian buildings, will greatly enhance the legibility, navigation and overall experience of the town. Temporary interventions can be used to test approaches and involve local people in co-designing this visual identity. A strong placemaking approach should look to integrate common themes into everything from signage to lighting, lampposts, benches, planters and town maps.

TOWN TEAM FOR CULTURE

There are already a number of strategic collaborative bodies to drive forward regeneration and community programmes in the town, some of which include a cultural voice or element. However, in the absence of a regularly meeting cultural group, there is a risk that this cultural plan will lack the leadership and resources to take it forward.

The identification of a Cultural Lead in the town is essential to this, with the ability to convene not only direct stakeholders in the cultural sector, but also draw in wider supporters and stakeholders to embed culture in wider initiatives and regeneration.

Stakeholders, in addition to dedicated cultural organisations, should include education, particularly Ilfracombe Academy, community action, 18h economy, creative industries and environment, that are able to meet, share information and coordinate activity in Ilfracombe. A Town Team for Culture would bring structure and consistency with regular meeting dates, agenda and a process for agreeing shared priorities and actions. This would help align cultural activity both between organisations and within wider strategic programmes.

One of the primary purposes of this team should be to collect and collate the shared views and priorities for culture in Ilfracombe and channel this voice into broader strategic and policy bodies including the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board and One Ilfracombe.

Membership of the town team should be open and welcoming, with consideration made for ensuring that participation is inclusive which may require small budgets to compensate freelancers to attend, translation and/or access support for people facing language or disability barriers. Representation of young people directly in the team is also strongly recommended, ensuring that cultural activity is relevant and that young people see that their voices are heard.

EVIDENCING IMPACT

Ilfracombe faces numerous economic and social needs. It is important to think about how culture contributes to wider priorities of social and economic transition, particularly those set out in the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan. This is an opportunity to show wider stakeholders what culture can do to help them in terms of increasing town centre footfall, youth opportunity, creative industries, visitor economy and community wellbeing.

Effective evaluation is central to achieving this, including putting in place performance measures and methods for gathering data that are shared across cultural stakeholders within the town. If all town stakeholders are inputting information about how cultural activities are bringing wider benefit to the town, this will significantly strengthen the case for investment when applying for further funding as well as convincing stakeholders beyond the cultural sector of the value in cultural investment.

Ownership and agency are also key in adding cultural value. Within Ilfracombe there is the opportunity to create a cultural ecosystem that local people have the power to shape and direct, enabling people to decide what culture is, who makes it, where it happens and who experiences it. Embedding cultural democracy and community

decision making into the cultural fabric of Ilfracombe will maximise the potential of culture to positively impact lives.

It is also important that the town doesn't see itself as working in isolation. As North Devon's most distinctive tourist destination, it has a mutual interest in promoting and supporting the wider cultural growth of North Devon, working with other towns and partners under the framework of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY

It is vital that all people who live in and visit the town can access, participate in and create the best that Ilfracombe culture has to offer. There is not a one-size fits all approach to achieving this, instead it is about embedding systemic attitudes to the way culture is commissioned and presented across the town. Mobility in particular has been identified as a key barrier facing people in the town, given the challenging topography of Ilfracombe and the higher than average levels of physical health problems and old age.

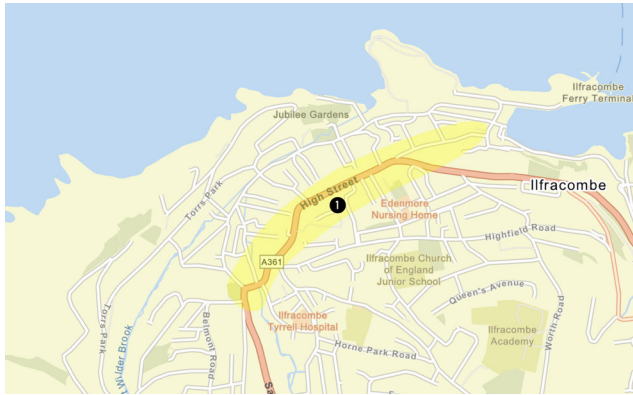
If an event, venue or cultural group doesn't make it explicitly clear that it welcomes people of different ages, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality and income level, then many people will assume it is not for them. As such, welcome needs to go above and beyond.

It is important to work with specialists who understand these barriers within Ilfracombe's communities such as One Ilfracombe to develop good practices that can be adopted wholesale across the sector.

Including accessibility needs in cultural funding applications should become standardised practice. Accessibility prioritises should include (but not be limited to) support for deaf and hearing impaired, usage of symbols and signs for those with reading difficulties and subsidisation for low income groups.

These approaches should equally apply to broader considerations of public realm commissions, street design and accessibility of decision-making bodies to ensure inclusion creates agency not just access.

CHARACTER AREA 1: THE HISTORIC SPINE



VISION

With a history that dates back to the 1400's and boasts stories of smugglers, Titanic survivors and paranormal activity, today this area remains a quirky, thriving thoroughfare for both visitors and residents alike.

A breeding ground for independent businesses, the Historic Spine provides artisan experiences for all that pass through offering top quality dining experiences, unique shopping opportunities and a taste of local culture via the celebration of its stunning architecture and pop-up experiences.

KEY WORDS

Unique, artisan, independent, local, intimate, quirky, thriving, celebratory, community, busy, buzzing, fun.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Independent businesses within the Historic Spine offer a real opportunity. The personalities of independents and the people that run them provide a strong sense of local identity that could be better reflected in the public realm experience, promotional activity and events.

The distinct and contrasting experiences of the Historic Spine can also be further developed. Fore Street's intimacy and heritage character, linked to the harbour, provide potential to tell heritage stories in the public realm; whilst the High Street itself provides a canvas for expressing what Ilfracombe is today, reflecting communities and character more directly.

KEY NEEDS

The primary needs of the High Street revolve around shifting perceptions. Many see it as rundown, declining and unsafe at night. There is a need to bring the community back into the High Street, both directly through community assets and services that draw people in for more reasons at different times of day, but also indirectly through activities geared towards celebrating the High Street, its independent businesses and a sense of community identity. Perceptions of safety on the High Street in the evening also need to be addressed, which currently puts off large proportions of the community.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Historic Spine offers a broad range of cultural and community infrastructure that could be supporting a stronger sense of a cultural hub. There is a particularly strong cluster of cultural venues and galleries at the intersection of Fore Street and the High Street with the Embassy Cinema, Doodles, Forty-Three and Montpellier Galleries. There are also several important community facilities within the High Street including the Lantern Centre and the Ilfracombe Centre. Lastly, the High Street contains a number of bars and restaurants that act as the main evening and night time economy of the town.

ALIGNMENT WITH KEY STRATEGIES

The proposals within this plan respond strongly to the need to improve public spaces within the High Street and further enhancement of Fore Street outlined in Objective 11 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan. Bringing community pride and ownership back into the High Street and Fore Street responds to Objective 16 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan - 'Maintain social cohesion and prevent social isolation'. Celebrating independents responds to Objective 5 - 'Promote the establishment of micro-businesses'.



HOW CAN THE HISTORIC SPINE RESPOND TO OUR CORE FRAMEWORK NEEDS?

Protect Our Wellbeing

From The Lantern, a Town Council owned building for use by the community for the community, to the Ilfracombe Centre, a hub of information and support for the town; The Historic Spine is home to some key spaces that provide much needed support to the community. Ensuring that the Historic Spine participates in town initiatives such as 'Ilfracombe Warm Spaces', whilst utilising vacant spaces for community use will build on existing successes.

Custodians of Heritage

One of the oldest streets in Ilfracombe, Fore Street boasts an exciting history of illicit smuggling, whilst the High Street itself is blessed with many listed buildings, making the area a potential hotspot for heritage. However, poor maintenance currently threatens the appeal of the area and shop front improvements could do much to boost the aesthetics of the High Street. The upcoming relocation of Ilfracombe Museum offers this area a particular opportunity to recognise and celebrate its existing assets.

Amplify Our Youth

When asked about the Historic Spine, young people admitted feeling scared by the area after dark - running down it if they had to be there at all. Initiatives such as DELTA, a youth drop in space provide dedicated safe spaces for young people, however more is needed. The High Street offers the opportunity to utilise vacant spaces for community use, whilst addressing nighttime safety in line with the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy 'Using Vacant Spaces to Fuel Culture'.

Celebrate Our Environment

Unlike other areas in Ilfracombe, the Historic Spine doesn't shout from the rooftops when it comes to celebrating the area's unique environment. The Earth Repair Shop, a community hub promoting sustainable living is an excellent example of how the High Street can contribute to the wild, rugged, natural identity of Ilfracombe. Investing in community generated initiatives like this can raise the profile of the High Street, supporting it to make a meaningful contribution to wider Ilfracombe's environment.

Supercharge Our Economy

The Historic Spine hosts a rich offering of independent businesses. From the artisan coffee shop Annie and the Flint, to the George & Dragon pub providing community quiz nights and day trips. From a variety of independent art galleries to Embassy Cinema, screening latest releases and alternative films. The reputation of the High Street does not match the reality of its offer. Targeted marketing campaigns celebrating the varied, independent offer available will help to combat this issue.

KEY PROJECTS:

Shopfront Enhancement

Utilising funds available from the Town Centre Enhancement Scheme, support high street businesses to upgrade their shop fronts. Identifying buildings that are most in need and working collaboratively and closely with those businesses will help to build ownership and trust in the scheme, in turn encouraging more shops to participate, which will only serve to improve the visitor experience.

Youth-focused Meanwhile

Like many high streets, Ilfracombe High Street is peppered with vacant units which are prime for activation. Utilising these spaces for youth-focused meanwhile activity such as workshops, talks, shows, meet-ups and performance is a great way to help local young people feel safer on the High Street whilst also contributing to changing the perception of the area through positive promotion.

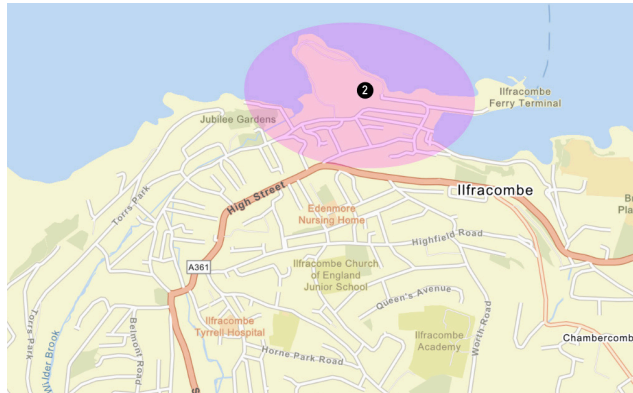
A Celebratory Narrative

There is lots to celebrate about this character area, however the current narrative from businesses and residents alike, focuses on the negative elements. Working collaboratively with the business community to develop a PR campaign that draws positive attention to the Historic Spine and celebrates the wealth of independents and artisan goods available is key in attracting visitors and improving footfall.

Evening Events

Events such as the 'Lighting of the Lights' demonstrate how impactful evening events on the High Street can be for the community and businesses of Ilfracombe. Developing an annual evening events programme that celebrates the High Street is a great way to attract visitors to the area whilst simultaneously challenging existing safety concerns. Joining an accreditation programme such as Purple Flag will further support this initiative by providing a comprehensive set of standards, management processes and good practice examples to help transform the evening and night time economy in Ilfracombe.

CHARACTER AREA 2: THE PROMENADE



VISION

A pleasure garden in its truest sense, The Promenade provides a picturesque gateway to the rest of the town, linking the harbour, green space, high street and beyond.

An open air community hub, The Promenade is alive with a rolling programme of activity throughout the year that appeals to all ages. It is the centre for shared experiences; providing a range of workshops, events and festivals for everyone to enjoy.

KEY WORDS

Picturesque, gateway, community, active, open, welcoming, hub, programmed, visible, lively, linking, collaborative, creative, culture, hub

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

The Promenade has the potential to be one of the UK's great seaside locations combining stunning landscape with intriguing experiences and high quality culture. There are a number of underutilised sites and spaces that offer opportunities to enhance the current experience, from strategic development sites like the former Golden Coast amusements to underutilised public realm areas such as the former Victoria Pavilion site. The role of the Landmark at the heart of this, as a National Portfolio Organisation, is crucial, capable of bringing activity and animation to its surroundings through festivals and events that draw in both visitors and locals alike.

KEY NEEDS

In its role as the primary visitor attraction of the town, there is a need to knit together the Promenade's attractions in a cohesive way to contribute to a holistic entertainment experience. There is a vital need to safeguard Ilfracombe Museum and The Space within the town given current uncertainties regarding their premises. The outdoor experience can also be improved, from benches and toilets to aesthetic enhancements. Finally local people need to feel ownership of this key jewel in the town, with more activities for children and young people as well as encouraging animation through community events and festivals.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Promenade is defined by significant indoor and outdoor attractions. Capstone Hill, Wildersmouth Beach, and Jubilee Gardens provide a rich mix of outdoor experiences. These are supported by assets such as the Clapping Circle, the historic Pleasure Grounds, and the Runnymede Bandstand. The Promenade also holds many of the town's key indoor attractions including the Landmark Theatre, Ilfracombe Museum and The SPACE. These programmed venues sit alongside a range of independents along the seafront. The Promenade also boasts a significant number of heritage buildings as well as a concentration of the town's main hotels, making it a tourism focal point.

ALIGNMENT WITH KEY STRATEGIES

Plans respond to the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan expectation that enhancement of the seafront capitalises on built heritage, cultural assets and open spaces (Policy Map 7). The Town Strategy emphasises that any new retail and leisure must provide diversity and not harm, displace or detract from the High Street. Plans also respond to Objective 3 and 8 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan of taking the cultural and tourism offer upmarket.



HOW CAN THE PROMENADE RESPOND TO OUR CORE FRAMEWORK NEEDS?

Protect Our Wellbeing

The picturesque gateway to Ilfracombe, The Promenade provides the start of many walkers' journeys. The Landmark Theatre and Runnymede Bandstand in Jubilee Gardens offer locals and visitors alike the opportunity to experience a variety of cultural activities, indoors and out. As an important gathering point in the town, uplifting the public realm through the provision of seating, lighting, artwork, play facilities and busking can improve people's experience of this important hub.

Custodians of Heritage

The Promenade is home to the Ilfracombe Museum. The intriguing and eclectic collection showcases treasures from the history of Ilfracombe, as well as collection jewels such as its two-headed kitten. Nearby is the Grade II listed Emmanuel Church, currently home to The SPACE, a dedicated performing arts space. The future of both venues are in question. Taking a proactive and strategic approach to protecting both assets has the potential to have town wide benefits.

Amplify Our Youth

The Promenade holds a lot of potential for young people in town, centred around the Landmark's ambitious strategy for Ilfracombe as a safe space and cultural hub for young people. In the crazy golf and Summer Fairground, there are the beginnings of a varied youth offer in the public realm. Expanding the role of the Landmark as a youth hub, and utilising existing green spaces for family fun events can anchor The Promenade as an important space for young people in Ilfracombe.

Celebrate Our Environment

Sheltered by the rocky cliff of Capstone, Wildersmouth Beach is a breathtaking, sand and shingle ancient cove. Once the scene of illicit smuggling, the beach is now popular with dog walkers. Unfortunately the water at Wildersmouth has been deemed as 'poor' quality by the environmental agency who advise against swimming in the sea. Water pollution is a subject close to the hearts of local people and should be urgently addressed, enabling this wonderful natural asset to be truly enjoyed.

Supercharge Our Economy

Ilfracombe offers people intriguing histories, adventurous experiences and a wealth of independent businesses to explore. The Promenade plays an important role in boasting a wealth of green space on which to programme town wide events, adding to the offer of the town as a whole. Utilising the space for pop-up markets and outdoor cultural events which support existing businesses to extend opening hours can help to supercharge the current offer.

KEY PROJECTS:

Community-led Culture

Safeguard the SPACE within Ilfracombe, even if required to relocate, as vital cultural infrastructure to seed and grow grassroots cultural events and activity. Increase activation of The Promenade for civic gatherings, community festivals, performances, parades and protests by making it easy to book and use the space. Bring together local stakeholders to develop a year-round programme of events and activities that will serve to enhance the town's reputation as a destination for outdoor culture in line with the Northern Devon Culture Strategy.

Power to the Public Realm

When surrounded by such captivating views it is easy to take the rest of the public realm for granted, however it is a fundamental tool in creating ownership and pride in place. Working collaboratively with the community via a co-design approach, explore ways in which the public realm within The Promenade can be improved, looking into seating provision, art installations and lighting interventions.

Landmark Talent & Participation

Grow the Landmark's role as a centre for seeding talent and creative skills through programmes such as the Inspired Minds partnership with The Creative Development Foundation (CDF) and Petroc College; creative attachments supporting mid-career artists; the Young Producers Programme; the Speak Up festival and their ongoing Talent and Participation programmes with primary and secondary schools.

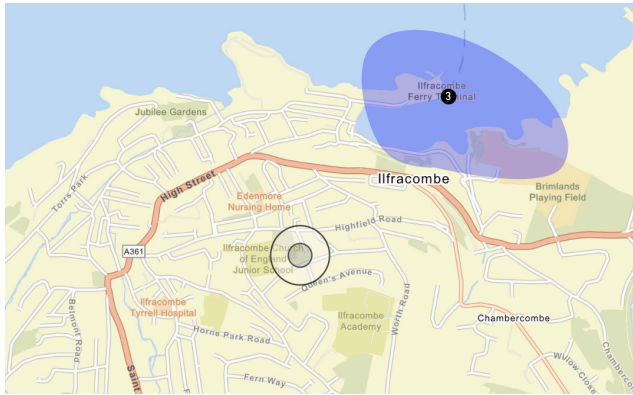
Ilfracombe Museum

Developing a robust strategy to support the relocation of Ilfracombe Museum is a fundamental project that will have an impact on The Promenade, whatever the outcome. Working collaboratively with the museum staff and trustees to develop a shared vision for the museum alongside a clear action plan will be key in protecting the collection and ensuring that the museum remains a distinct part of Ilfracombe's cultural landscape.

Tourist Information Centre

Work with the IBTA and relevant stakeholders to identify suitable options for the future of the Tourist Information Centre, exploring relocation, partnerships and collaborations with other local services, funding opportunities and new model testing and development if appropriate.

CHARACTER AREA 3: MARITIME GEM



VISION

Boasting some of Ilfracombe's key attractions including Damian Hirst's Verity, St Nicholas Chapel, The Shannon all-weather lifeboat, the watersports hub and Ilfracombe Aquarium, the Maritime Gem area is a stunning working harbour alive with culture and steeped in maritime tradition.

As such it is an area that actively promotes Ilfracombe's deep connection with the sea, championing initiatives and activities that promote wellbeing, safety and celebration of the powerful waters that neighbour the town.

KEY WORDS

Beautiful, dramatic, prehistoric, modern, maritime, tradition, working, legacy, attractions, powerful, informative, destination.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Maritime Gem was previously the focal point of artist Damien Hirst's engagement with the town including a restaurant, gallery and the famous Verity statue. In recent years this engagement has reduced with the restaurant and gallery closing, however the legacy remains in the shape of a continued visual arts presence along the Quay and St James Place. This combination offers a real opportunity for attracting a diversified, upmarket visitor profile that can be further supported by higher quality restaurant and accommodation offers such as the boutique Antidote Wine Room.

KEY NEEDS

Maritime Gem has to balance the needs of several user groups. First, it needs to operate as a working harbour, recognising the restrictions that come with that. But the location also offers many attractions for both visitors and local people alike, from quayside restaurants to attractions such as the Verity sculpture and aquarium. As such, there needs to be the means to enjoy the experience of the harbour in a safe way that doesn't infringe on its working operations. Maritime Gem is also a focal point of community identity and numerous important community activities, something to be celebrated and protected.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Quay itself is dominated by the Verity sculpture, the aquarium and routes up to the chapel of St Nicholas. St James Place and Broad Street include a cluster of independent galleries and studios alongside some higher quality restaurants. The working harbour holds great community and cultural significance, particularly the RNLB Lifeboat Station. Tourist focused water activities that launch from the harbour also make this a key location for visitors wanting to engage more directly with the sea. Finally the southern end provides a link towards outdoor activity areas including the new Watersports Hub.

ALIGNMENT WITH KEY STRATEGIES

Leisure, tourism and recreation in Maritime Gem is encouraged within the Local Plan. Any interventions must take into account that the Inner and Outer Harbour areas are safeguarded for harbour related uses, emphasised in Objective 7 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan. Reducing conflict between user groups is a priority of the Transport Masterplan. Enhancement of heritage is a priority within the Local Plan including capitalising on public art to build on Verity's legacy.



HOW CAN THE MARITIME GEM RESPOND TO OUR CORE FRAMEWORK NEEDS?

Protect Our Wellbeing

Maritime Gem brings together Ilfracombe's adventurous spirit and community approach, providing a real sense of what makes the town unique. Built in 1866, Ilfracombe is home to the RNLI and more recently the Watersports Hub, both working hard to engage people safely with the sea and associated activities it offers. Organisations such as Coastal Swim Coaching support people to responsibly open water swim and Ilfracombe and North Devon Sub Aqua Club enable people from across the globe to safely dive, promoting both a healthy body and mind, paired with a sense of wild adventure.

Custodians of Heritage

Boasting St. Nicholas Chapel, the oldest functioning lighthouse in the country, alongside a number of significant underwater wrecks owned by the North Devon Sub Aqua Club, Maritime Gem is an area steeped in history. Home to a number of significant adventurers and naval officers, the area once provided refuge to ships avoiding the dangers of pirates based on Lundy Island. The area offers an exciting opportunity to bring heritage to life through walking guides, storytelling and educational trails, building on existing initiatives such as the Ilfracombe Fish Trail.

Amplify Our Youth

From sailing to wild camping to coasteering, Maritime Gem offers young people dream worthy adventure opportunities. Many of the incredible opportunities are only available through existing groups such as scouts or schools, or via paid membership to clubs such as Y-Sail, aiming to get young people into sailing. Investment into free or subsidised programmes that promote access for all young people, regardless of means will break down barriers to entry.

Celebrate Our Environment

Maritime Gem currently does a great job of celebrating the unique coastal environment of Ilfracombe. Visitors and residents alike can enjoy varied experiences, ranging from Ilfracombe Aquarium, to wildlife coastal cruises, to the Sea Ilfracombe Maritime Festival. The Visit Ilfracombe website showcases a host of activities, however the development of an Ilfracombe cultural brand and marketing strategy, alongside public realm interventions can increase awareness and celebration of the existing offer.

Supercharge Our Economy

Maritime Gem pulls its weight when it comes to hosting an enticing visitor offer. The majestic 'Verity sculpture' attracts both national and international visitors, whilst the diversity of wildlife tourism is outstanding. From the biggest puffin colony in the South West, to swimming with seals at Lundy Island to deep sea fishing, Ilfracombe offers an abundance for tourists to experience. Shouting about the reality of what the town has to offer should be a priority.

KEY PROJECTS:

Activities for All

Bring together relevant partners to develop a subsidised maritime-focused programme for young people in Ilfracombe, building in opportunities to learn about sea safety and well-being alongside providing activities such as watersports and sailing. Linking this to career development and celebration of the local maritime industry will support some of the existing work being delivered by One Ilfracombe, whilst also breaking down barriers to participation and engagement.

Celebration and Stories

The public realm surrounding Maritime Gem is an exciting landscape, filled with some of the area's key attractions and surrounded by stunning scenery. 'Celebration and Stories' sees the development of a promotional campaign that champions the area's cultural assets yet also shares the lesser known stories of the local business owners, harbour characters and underwater wrecks, sharing important information regarding the working nature of the harbour whilst retaining a personal and intimate approach that appeals to locals and visitors alike.

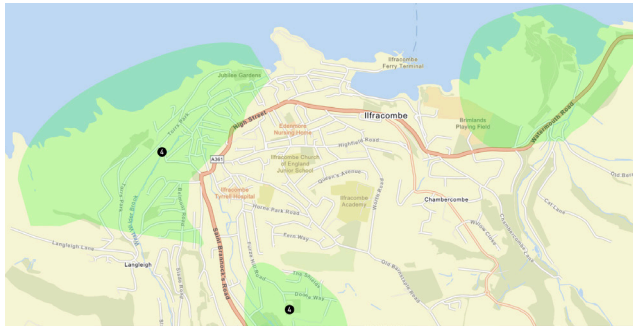
Heritage Trail

Incorporate Maritime Gem into a town wide heritage trail that ushers footfall across the town, whilst also actively promoting Ilfracombe's captivating yet curious history. Ensure that the interactive trail utilises both digital and physical information points creating a trail that is open to all and underpinned by eye-catching and distinctive signage that develops a visual identity for the town and enhances visitor experience.

Public Art

Utilise the internationally renowned Verity as a springboard to launch a public art project that invites the general public to submit artwork ideas for a new public art commission/s in Ilfracombe, inspired by or as a response to the original sculpture. Bring together a commissioning group of local people, including creatives, students, business owners and Local Authority to oversee the project, developing local ownership of the initiative whilst creating substantial marketing opportunities that drive footfall to the area.

CHARACTER AREA 4: THE WILD SURROUNDS



VISION

Offering panoramic views and some peace and quiet away from the everyday, The Wild Surrounds offer unspoilt areas of wild natural beauty that invigorate all that pass through.

A conduit to connect people of all ages to the incredible nature that Ilfracombe boasts, the area champions the conservation of the town's natural heritage through a range of projects, trails and interventions created in collaboration with local people.

KEY WORDS

Accessible, unspoilt, wild, connecting, serene, scenic, exploration, nature, wildlife, views, inspiring, wildlife, calming, quiet, peaceful, unknown

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

The dramatic landscape is itself the key opportunity, with little to rival it in the country. This is matched by various strands of cultural heritage linked to the landscape, from the Tarka Trail to the old railway line. These areas offer a significant opportunity to connect organisations and initiatives across nature and environment, including the North Devon Coast National Landscape and North Devon UNESCO Biosphere; cultural heritage; and health, sport and wellbeing. Opportunities include the various walking trails within these areas, key views across the town; beach and swimming areas and the possibilities for engagement in wildlife and landscape conservation and preservation.

KEY NEEDS

The natural surroundings of Ilfracombe are a valuable source of wellbeing, interest and activity for both residents and visitors alike. However, a combination of challenging terrain and lack of easy routes limit its accessibility, particularly given the large number of elderly and disabled people. Increasing this accessibility, both in terms of awareness of what and how people can access these areas, as well as physical interventions such as regular benches, surfaces that less physically able people can easily use and improved wayfinding can open this incredible resource up to more people.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing walking routes such as the South West Coast Path; Tarka Trail; the 4 Peak Challenge and old Railway line should be considered as cultural infrastructure in their own right including points of historic interest such as the Lime kiln, cairn, former smuggling coves and railway tunnels. Designations such as being an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are also of enormous value and the cultural significance of the area's land and marine biodiversity should be taken into account, including historic links with Georgian and Victorian era naturalists. The sea itself is of enormous cultural significance, both for its identity and activities it offers.

ALIGNMENT WITH KEY STRATEGIES

Improving access, footpaths and cycling around Ilfracombe is a priority within the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan, including the gap in the Tarka Trail and strategic footpath/cycle network between Ilfracombe and Knowle. Using culture to increase the access to and protection of nature infrastructure responds to Objective 18 'Improve the health and wellbeing of Ilfracombe residents' of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan and the 'Protecting Our Landscapes' priority of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy.



HOW CAN THE WILD SURROUNDS RESPOND TO OUR CORE FRAMEWORK NEEDS?

Protect Our Wellbeing

From walking, to cycling, to wild swimming, the breathtaking landscape of The Wild Surrounds offers an exciting opportunity to explore the practice of green social prescribing, building strong and meaningful connections between healthcare providers and nature based partners such as North Devon Coast National Landscape and North Devon UNESCO Biosphere. Breaking down barriers to The Wild Surrounds through accessible events such as walking festivals, nature trails, mindfulness classes and food foraging activities provides an adventurous approach to getting active for all ages and abilities.

Custodians of Heritage

Dating back to the Iron Age, the beauty and drama of The Wild Surrounds has a rich history linked to cultural figures such as JMW Turner and George Eliot. Whilst educational interpretation of the area exists, there is huge opportunity to enhance it through the creation of heritage trails linked to the wider town and cultural activities such as the recent 'Tides of Change' guided heritage walk celebrating archive imagery facilitated by Beaford Arts and written by Dave Edgcombe from North Devon Coast National Landscape.

Amplify Our Youth

As a young person in Ilfracombe, The Wild Surrounds offer a sense of freedom, adventure and connection to nature. Investment into youth programmes and promotion of existing projects such as 'Finding Nature's Footprints' delivered by North Devon Coast National Landscape which utilises creativity to connect young people to nature and the environmental sector; and 'The Forest School at Combe Martin' which offers learning and adventure opportunities to children, provide excellent pathways for young people to take ownership of their surroundings.

Celebrate Our Environment

With organisations such as Cairn Conservation Carers and the National Trust, The Wild Surrounds benefit from both local care and national conservation. Cultural activity can provide an exciting opportunity to celebrate the area; for example commissioning site specific art work throughout the South West Coast Path, hosting outdoor arts celebrating North Devon arts organisations such as Red Herring and photography competitions that give both local people and visitors the opportunity to celebrate the landscape.

Supercharge Our Economy

From the Four Peaks Challenge to the Tarka Trail to the South West Coast Path, The Wild Surrounds offers ample opportunity to boost responsible nature based tourism in Ilfracombe, targeting those seeking an active break. Working alongside national partners and local community groups to promote respectful interaction with the landscape will be key to maintaining the unique environment of The Wild Surrounds.

KEY PROJECTS:

The Ilfracombe Walking Festival

Underpinned by a programme of activity that champions health, well-being and exploration including pursuits such as foraging and mindfulness, 'The Ilfracombe Walking Festival' can provide a much-needed opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the stunning local landscapes. It also serves as a fantastic mechanism to attract visitors during quieter seasons, raise the profile of Ilfracombe and support the development of a deeper understanding of the town's cultural and natural heritage.

The Four Peak Art Trail

Develop an art trail that takes in each peak of the 'Four Peak Challenge' (The Cairn, The Torrs, Capstone Hill and Hillsborough) encouraging new audiences to explore Ilfracombe through a cultural lens. In this instance public art can act as a mechanism to engage local communities in the transformation and celebration of the place that they live whilst also creating an experience that encourages visitor numbers throughout the year.

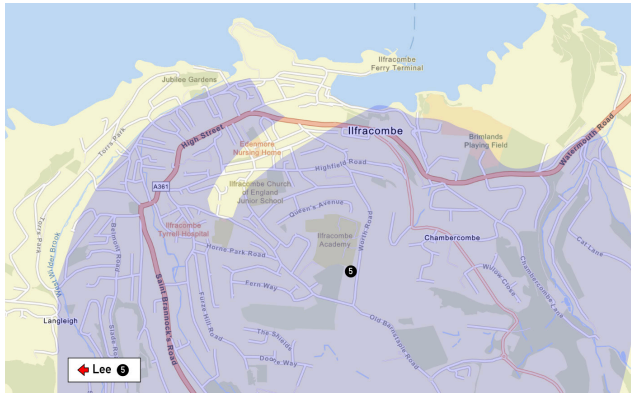
BioBlitz

An informal and fun way for young people and other members of the public to learn alongside experts whilst sharing and developing their enthusiasm for nature, BioBlitz' utilise a set amount of time, to find and identify as many species of plants, animals and fungi as possible in a given area. The Wild Surrounds provide a perfect canvas for this type of activity which should offer a range of school activities and public events to underpin part of a genuine scientific survey of the area.

Celebrate the Sky

Taking place in national parks across the UK, Dark Skies festivals are all about discovering, learning and enjoying the dark and the stars that you can see as a result. Taking inspiration from this ethos, The Wild Surrounds offer a fantastic canvas to develop evening events and activities that celebrate the sky and support local people in becoming bonafide stargazers. Working with local outdoor arts organisations such as Red Herring to test evening programming would provide a great first step in this process.

CHARACTER AREA 5: ON OUR DOORSTEP



VISION

Home to diverse communities, well-loved green space and local culture, On Our Doorstep provides a varied yet captivating backdrop for daily living.

Underpinned by community ownership, the area champions shared decision-making, putting the power and resources into the hands of local people to create the change they wish to see in the place they live.

KEY WORDS

Diverse, local, connectivity, community ownership, wellbeing, collaboration, inclusivity, intergenerational

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

One Ilfracombe offers a strong platform for a holistic approach to culture within community development, progressing the role of social prescribing to link health needs with cultural engagement. Pocket meadows through to public parks offer a canvas of opportunities for community culture in public space. Large numbers of secondary students studying creative subjects present real opportunities around creative education. The creation of a new neighbourhood as part of the Southern Extension to Ilfracombe offers a chance to deliver additional community and cultural infrastructure to respond to the needs of future communities.

KEY NEEDS

Many local needs are structural and complex, from standards of housing to levels of health. As such, culture needs to help support community empowerment, enhancing the ability for communities to instigate positive change in their immediate surroundings, from events in public parks to initiatives to improve the look and upkeep of local streets and heritage properties. These need to have an inclusive focus, ensuring that marginalised groups including young people, elderly and people with disabilities have agency in defining the needs of their neighbourhoods. Education challenges indicate a significant need around creative education and culture in raising young people's aspiration and educational attainment.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Cultural infrastructure within Ilfracombe's residential areas primarily focuses around community and social assets including schools, sports clubs and churches. Ilfracombe Academy, as the town's only secondary school as well as a large public building offers particular significance in this context. In addition, Ilfracombe's heritage, including large numbers of residential listed buildings, also present important cultural infrastructure within the town which extends to intangible heritage, highlighted by groups like the Holy Trinity Graveyard Group. Parks and community gardens like Cow Green, Bicclescombe Park and St James' Park are significant cultural infrastructure as gathering spaces and focal points of community pride.

ALIGNMENT WITH KEY STRATEGIES

Cultural projects in this zone will allow Ilfracombe to respond to likely future demand indicated in the Local Plan, including the Southern extension. A focus on young people reflects Objective 14 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan to help young people understand their value in the community, further emphasised by the Local Plan's ambition for the development of Ilfracombe Academy as a 'specialist' arts school, and the 'Nurturing the Future' priority of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy.



HOW CAN ON OUR DOORSTEP RESPOND TO OUR CORE FRAMEWORK NEEDS?

Protect Our Wellbeing

On Our Doorstep offers a meaningful opportunity for local residents to genuinely shape and drive the cultural provision of Ilfracombe. Already home to a rich and diverse programme of events, initiatives and clubs driven by the community, the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan should strive to prioritise community ownership and shared decision making, whilst building on the existing 'Community Connector' social prescribing programme led by One Ilfracombe and Combe Coastal GP Practice.

Custodians of Heritage

On Our Doorstep is home to a multitude of local people actively celebrating and preserving the heritage of Ilfracombe. From 'Dead Famous' at Holy Trinity Church, bringing to life the stories of historic figures of the town to 'IBAC Ilfracombe Buildings Appreciation Collective', an online celebration of the architecture of the area; On Our Doorstep represents local knowledge and skills to be harnessed, nurtured, shared and amplified throughout Ilfracombe.

Amplify Our Youth

On Our Doorstep is home to Ilfracombe Academy, Ilfracombe Infants and Nursery School and Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School. Working with the schools to ensure that the young people of Ilfracombe are engaged meaningfully in culture, actively demonstrating the careers in culture that are possible in and around Ilfracombe can support a talent pipeline within the area. Linking to town assets such as The Landmark Theatre can create pathways for children from primary education to College to careers.

Celebrate Our Environment

Like the rest of Ilfracombe, On Our Doorstep boasts some outstanding outdoors experiences. From the Green Flag awarded Bicclescombe Park, to the historic woodland of Cairn Nature reserve; On Our Doorstep connects local people to nature on their doorsteps. Initiatives such as Cairn Conservation Carers demonstrate the power of people to protect and celebrate Ilfracombe's green spaces. Building on such opportunities to volunteer can further connect people with their environment, enhancing ownership and pride in Ilfracombe.

Supercharge Our Economy

On Our Doorstep is the heart of Ilfracombe, creating an incredible community spirit that has the power to supercharge the economy. Community generated events such as Ilfracombe Art Trail, Sea Ilfracombe and Jack in the Green are examples of local people coming together to celebrate the uniqueness of Ilfracombe, for all to enjoy. Such efforts can be linked into wider town PR and regeneration initiatives to ensure that Ilfracombe retains and grows its extraordinary and intriguing town character.

KEY PROJECTS:

Shared Decision-making

Develop a steering committee enabling residents to be actively involved in making their neighbourhood a better place to live. Support these groups with small funding pots to develop community-led initiatives, helping to build trust and developing confidence in shared-decision making processes. Underpin this project with robust, transparent yet simple governance that removes all barriers to engagement and encourages buy-in from a broad range of people.

Ilfracombe Open House

'Ilfracombe Open House' empowers local communities, civic organisations and local businesses to showcase their buildings to the wider public and community. As a concept it encourages audiences to explore new places, learn about different communities and experience diverse local architecture first-hand. It should be combined with an informative yet fun educational programme that offers practical advice on how to maintain heritage buildings, ensuring that old skills and expertise are not lost.

Urban Greening

As a whole, Ilfracombe can hardly be described as urban, however there are some areas within On Our Doorstep that could benefit from greening projects and initiatives. Developing community-led greening projects that focus on the development of interventions such as pocket parks, skip gardens and bus stop greening is a great way to develop local ownership of place-making initiatives whilst making tangible change to the local area. Working with schools and community groups to develop maintenance plans also ensure longevity of the project.

Get Tough on Vacant Property

Work collaboratively across Local Authority departments to identify vacant and vandalised properties in Ilfracombe which require immediate attention and upkeep. Utilise the Empty Homes Programme, Environmental Health (Section 215 Notice) and heritage routes to kickstart conversations with landowners and if needed exercise Local Authority powers to demand improved preservation of the buildings in question.

ACTION PLAN

The subsequent tables set out a number of actions that have been developed alongside local stakeholders. These actions should be taken to begin realising the projects outlined in this plan. These can be best summarised in 10 overarching points:

- 1.** Form an Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture and identify a Culture Lead to drive and support a cohesive and collaborative cultural offer for Ilfracombe [Action 1-6]
- 2.** Celebrate the rich cultural offer of Ilfracombe via strategic comms planning, creative marketing and collaborative cross promotion [Action 7-11]
- 3.** Enhance the built environment and public realm, utilising cultural interventions, community collaboration and policy [Action 12-16]
- 4.** Animate the High Street and Promenade using vacant spaces to commission creative displays, pop-up cultural events and community meanwhile use [Action 17-23]
- 5.** Enhance Ilfracombe's cultural identity through the delivery of new cultural events and public art whilst actively supporting the town's current creative offer [Action 24-26]
- 6.** Support the diversification of the evening and night time economy by commissioning cultural programming that aims to extend the season, improve perception and increase safety [Action 27-29]
- 7.** Support young people in Ilfracombe to access cultural activity and education, developing opportunities to progress in the creative industries [Action 30-33]
- 8.** Embed shared decision making into cultural programming in Ilfracombe [Action 34]
- 9.** Attract external funding, centralise resources and collect and apply learning to maximise the impact of culture in Ilfracombe [Action 35- 41]

1. FORM AN ILFRACOMBE TOWN TEAM FOR CULTURE AND IDENTIFY A CULTURE LEAD TO DRIVE AND SUPPORT A COHESIVE AND COLLABORATIVE CULTURAL OFFER FOR ILFRACOMBE

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
1	Adopt the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan	All	Immediate	£	XXX
2	Form an Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture action group, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders including cultural, creative industries, education, community, 18 hour economy and environmental partners	All	Immediate	£	XXX
3	Proactively ensure that the Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture represents diverse voices, committing to youth representation within the action group	All	Immediate	£	XX
4	Identify a Culture Lead with the capacity and expertise to drive and facilitate a collaborative and active Town Team for Culture	All	Immediate	££	XXX
5	Ensure that the Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture is represented on the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board, the North Devon Council Group and the Northern Devon Cultural Partnership	All	Medium	£	XX
6	Commit to ambitious and exemplary environmental practices as Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture which reflect and celebrate the unique natural landscape of the town	All	Medium	£	XX

2. CELEBRATE THE RICH CULTURAL OFFER OF ILFRACOMBE VIA STRATEGIC COMMS PLANNING, CREATIVE MARKETING AND COLLABORATIVE CROSS PROMOTION

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
7	Utilising the successful Visit Ilfracombe platform, ensure all cultural activity in the town is clearly listed on the website and updated regularly	All	Immediate	£	X
8	Utilise the Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture to create a network of cross promotion between town stakeholders, amplifying the rich cultural offer of Ilfracombe	All	Immediate	£	X
9	Create a strategic comms plan that aims to develop a cultural brand for Ilfracombe, utilising existing events and festivals as well as new cultural activity to promote Ilfracombe's cultural offer and identity	All	Medium	££	XXX
10	Develop cultural, heritage and environmental trails in and around Ilfracombe that connect the town in residents and visitors minds, whilst celebrating what is unique to Ilfracombe. Where possible, integrate technology such as augmented reality	All	Medium	££	XX
11	Work across Northern Devon with regional partners to devise and implement a multi-faceted marketing strategy to promote the cultural offer of Northern Devon and Ilfracombe within it. Utilise the cultural brand, connected communication and online platforms as tools to showcase and celebrate what the region has to offer	All	Long term	££	XX

3. ENHANCE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC REALM, UTILISING CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS, COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND POLICY

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
12	Identify buildings which are most in need and utilise the Town Centre Enhancement Scheme to financially support businesses to upgrade their shop fronts	The Historic Spine	Immediate	£	XXX
13	Work collaboratively across Local Authority departments to identify vacant and vandalised properties which require attention. Utilising the Empty Homes Programme, environmental health (Section 215 Notice) and heritage powers, encourage and enforce landowners to upkeep properties in need	On Our Doorstep	Immediate	£	XXX
14	Use cultural and community events such as litter picking and paint the town days to bring local residents together to improve the public realm of Ilfracombe	All	Medium	£	XXX
15	Improve wayfinding throughout the town by installing creative signage and public art that amplifies and celebrates the unique history and environment of Ilfracombe	All	Medium	££	XX
16	Celebrate the wild, rugged nature of Ilfracombe in its urban residential areas through the commissioning of community-led green interventions such as pocket parks, skip gardens and green bus stops	On Our Doorstep	Medium	££	XX

4. ANIMATE THE HIGH STREET AND PROMENADE USING VACANT SPACES TO COMMISSION CREATIVE DISPLAYS, POP-UP CULTURAL EVENTS AND COMMUNITY MEANWHILE USE

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
17	Reference the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy, '6.3.2 Using Vacant Spaces to Fuel Culture' and learn and share best practice regarding meanwhile use from neighbouring towns such as Barnstaple	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Immediate	£	X
18	Kickstart interest and confidence in delivering meanwhile projects by using publicly owned stock in Ilfracombe Town Centre to deliver an exemplar project	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Immediate	££	XX
19	Create a master database of all vacant units and landlords on the High Street and Promenade	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Immediate	£	X
20	Contact landlords and confirm vacant units that can be used for meanwhile cultural activity. Identify the most effective means of animation i.e. window displays, pop-up events and/or longer term meanwhile use	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Immediate	£	X
21	Matchmake partnerships between landlords with vacant units and creative practitioners and community groups who are in need of space	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Medium	£	XX
22	Support creative practitioners and community groups to realise cultural meanwhile use projects by signposting to funding opportunities and 'how to guides' such as 'Hunt and Darton Toolkit', as well as providing basis templates and guides such as event management plans and RAMS	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Medium	£	XX
23	Proactively ensure that young people are part of animating the High Street, creating space within the commissioning, production and delivery of meanwhile projects	The Historic Spine and The Promenade	Medium	£	x

5. ENHANCE ILFRACOMBE'S CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE DELIVERY OF NEW CULTURAL EVENTS AND PUBLIC ART WHILST ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE TOWN'S CURRENT CREATIVE OFFER

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
24	As the Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture, review the 'Key Projects' highlighted within the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan and prioritise delivery based on impact, budget, likelihood of funding, timeline and delivery partners	All	Medium	£	X
25	Seek external funding and develop collaborative working in order to deliver prioritised key projects for Ilfracombe	All	Medium	£	XX
26	In 2012 'Verity' was granted to Ilfracombe on loan for 20 years. Build relationships with Damien Hirst and negotiate an extended loan of 'Verity' for the town	Maritime Gem	Long Term	£	XXX

6. ENHANCE ILFRACOMBE'S CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE DELIVERY OF NEW CULTURAL EVENTS AND PUBLIC ART WHILST ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE TOWN'S CURRENT CREATIVE OFFER

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
27	Building on existing evening event successes such as 'Lighting of the Lights', commission new cultural activity in the evening and night, extending existing programming to support the 18 hour economy wherever possible	The Historic Spine, The Promenade and Maritime Gem	Medium	££	XX
28	Commission an Evening and Night-time Strategy for Ilfracombe Town Centre	The Historic Spine, The Promenade and Maritime Gem	Medium	££	XX
29	Aspire to undertake the Purple Flag accreditation scheme	The Historic Spine, The Promenade and Maritime Gem	Long Term	££	XXX

7. SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN ILFRACOMBE TO ACCESS CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND EDUCATION, DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROGRESS IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
30	Increase local aspiration levels in young people by identifying culturally successful people from Ilfracombe (who stayed and left) and creating a programme of aspirational marketing, events and mentoring	All	Medium	££	XX
31	Support the Landmark Theatres, Creative Development Foundation and other organisations focusing on delivering programmes which provide opportunities for young people to enter the creative industries	All	Medium	££	XX
32	Bring together young people, education establishments and cultural sector partners to identify key skills and develop programmes that support young people's development into the creative industries	All	Medium	££	XX
33	Ensure all local young people have access to cultural and sporting facilities in Ilfracombe through the provision of subsidies where finance is a barrier	All	Medium	££	XXX

8. EMBED SHARED DECISION MAKING INTO CULTURAL PROGRAMMING IN ILFRACOMBE

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
34	Reference the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy, '6.4.1b Created by and with Communities' and embed shared decision making and cultural democracy into existing and new cultural programming to build ownership and expertise with the local community	All	Immediate	£	XXX

9. ATTRACT EXTERNAL FUNDING, CENTRALISE RESOURCES AND COLLECT AND APPLY LEARNING TO MAXIMISE THE IMPACT OF CULTURE IN ILFRACOMBE

Number	Action	Zone	Timescale	Cost	Benefit
35	Work alongside funders such as Arts Council England to provide free training to creative practitioners and cultural organisations in making funding applications	All	Immediate	£	XX
36	Signpost creative practitioners and cultural organisations to local, regional, national and international grant funding opportunities to support and develop their work	All	Immediate	£	XX
37	As Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture identify a large, strategic fund (such as ACE's Place Partnership) and use the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan to support a bid for external funding	All	Immediate	£	XXX
38	As Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture centralise physical resources to build capacity by performing a group audit of equipment and identify what can be shared or purchased collaboratively	All	Immediate	£	XX
39	Make cultural programming easier and more accessible by providing free administrative resources such as event management plan and RAMS templates	All	Immediate	£	X
40	Compile all existing evaluations of past cultural activity in Ilfracombe and identify key lessons to date. Use this information to improve provision and help attract external funding	All	Immediate	£	X
41	As Ilfracombe Town Team for Culture, agree a baseline standard for evaluating cultural projects. This should include photos, testimonials, number of attendees and key lessons learnt. All evaluation resources should be centralised in a bid to share best practice and provide collateral to market Ilfracombe as a unique cultural destination	All	Medium	£	XXX

RESOURCING

RAISING ILFRACOMBE'S CAPACITY FOR FUNDRAISING

The recently successful fundraising for the Ilfracombe Watersports Hub with £1.5m from Heart of the South West LEP, £1.35m from the Coastal Communities Fund, and £130,000 from Sport England highlights what can be achieved in the town when community, local and regional partners come together to leverage investment.

However, Ilfracombe has faced several disadvantages when it comes to accessing larger funding opportunities for culture that could achieve transformative impact for the town. With a cultural sector dominated by creative freelancers and voluntary organisations there is little experience or organisational capacity for fundraising embedded in the town. Furthermore, as a smaller town within a larger district and region, it can find itself missing out to other towns with larger, more experienced cultural sectors capable of arguing the case for their own cultural investment both locally and nationally.

As such, there is an important role for larger partners with greater fundraising capacity and experience including North Devon Council, Landmark Theatres and One Ilfracombe to work with local partners to identify priority projects that might be pulled together in larger portfolio bids. Prioritising this within the next opportunities for strategic funding, be they ACE Place Partnerships-style funds; Levelling Up 3; or Town/High Street or Coastal regeneration funds.

This chapter outlines some key routes to be explored in generating the resources needed to deliver the plan, ranging from this type of large investment, to patient local government investment, through to smaller grants and support.

LOCAL AUTHORITY SUPPORT

Key Projects: Seed partnership support and strategic gaps

Direct Local Authority funds can play a key role in addressing gaps where investment could act as a strong catalyst for change and funding from other sources is unlikely to be forthcoming.

Early stage support for the delivery of the Cultural Plan will be key, with particular emphasis on the formation and development of cultural partnerships and capacity building.

Local Authorities also have a key role to play in the integration of culture within regeneration, making best use of Local Authority owned assets to support cultural uses within the town.

Requests for Local Authority support should be targeted, consistent and strategic with a strong rationale for where support can be most effective, rather than addressing isolated projects.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

Key Projects: Small-scale capital projects, feasibility studies, skills and business support

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is an allocated fund dispersed by central government to local authorities to support activities across 3 main activity streams; Community & Place; Supporting Local Business; and People & Skills. Funding for Northern Devon has already been allocated until 2025.

Longer term it is anticipated that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will continue beyond 2025 in some format as a direct replacement for the EU Regional Development Fund, although details of how and what format that will take are yet to be confirmed.

Funding will likely be dependent on places being able to show clear, partner-led plans for community development, economic good growth and the promotion of skills in their region and therefore elements of the Cultural Plan emphasising these elements should be considered priorities within the next round of funding.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Key Projects: Landmark capital projects with strong cultural or economic development significance

It has been announced that funding for the 3rd round of the Levelling Up Fund will be reserved for high quality bids that missed out in Round 2. Therefore, projects within this plan will not be eligible. Given that North Devon and Ilfracombe have not received funding through the previous rounds, despite the strong case for support in Ilfracombe.

There is a case that could be taken directly to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for investment in the town, highlighting how it has missed out on previous funding. This would need to position key cultural investments within a wider suite of transformative projects for the town that address key missions outlined in the Levelling Up White Paper.

Culture and heritage have consistently been seen as vital to Levelling, particularly in delivering Mission 8: Well-being and Mission 9: Pride in Place. Therefore there is value in lobbying for inclusion of cultural projects within a direct proposal for place investment to DLUHC.

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Key Projects: Culture and creative projects and programmes aligned to place, arts organisations and individual practitioners

Arts Council is likely to be the most consistent source of both small and larger strategic funding for the cultural plan, and engagement with regional Arts Council Officers to identify key opportunities to support the delivery of the plan should be an early priority.

The recent successful Cultural Development Fund application in Barnstaple makes it unlikely that Ilfracombe will be successful in the current round of this fund. However, future bids for similar place-based strategic investments should be considered.

In the meantime, encouraging Ilfracombe organisations to access National Project Grants of up to and beyond £30,000 should be a priority to help deliver individual projects outlined in the plan, as well as helping individual artists and creatives in the town to access Developing Your Creative Practice grants.

A regional application for North Devon to access Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme should be considered, with Ilfracombe as a central focus of the bid given its potential as a centre for community-led cultural activity in a deprived area. It is recommended that close work is undertaken alongside ACE to identify the most appropriate alignment of funding opportunities and action plan recommendations.

NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND

Key Projects: Heritage Projects

The National Lottery Heritage is the largest dedicated grant funder of the UK's heritage, providing funding for heritage projects from £3,000 up to millions of pounds. The National Lottery champions the value of heritage for all and funds projects that sustain and transform the UK's heritage.

The National Lottery Heritage funds a broad range of projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional and local heritage of the UK. These include, but are not limited to:

- Oral history recordings of people's stories, memories and songs, as a way of communicating and revealing the past
- Cultural traditions exploring the history of different cultures through storytelling, or things that you do as part of your community. This could be anything from dance and theatre, to food or clothing It could also include the heritage of languages and dialects
- Nature works to improve habitats or conserve species, as well as helping people to connect to nature in their daily lives
- Landscapes and the countryside large-scale rural projects that help improve landscapes for people and nature, by for example, restoring habitats and celebrating the cultural traditions of the land
- Commemorations and celebrations telling the stories and histories of people, communities, places or events related to specific times and dates

CROWDFUNDING AND INDIVIDUAL PHILANTHROPY

Key Projects: Project based public cultural commissions such as public art, greening projects culture trails, and public events

Crowdfunding is a potentially effective way of raising funds for cultural activities, asking large amounts of people to donate small amounts of money.

Specialist platforms such as Spacehive are dedicated to placemaking projects that seek to create benefit within their local area and communities, encouraging people to back projects in their own backyard. Crowdfunding is an excellent way of combining fundraising with the notion of cultural democracy in that it empowers people to fund exactly what they want to see.

Crowdfunding is reliant on critical mass and momentum so it is best suited to projects that already have some form of public backing and that will have a clear public and community benefit. Having some existing financial backing for the project prior to launching is also advantageous as donations tend to increase once projects reach 70%+ of their target.

RATES MITIGATION

Key Projects: Pop-Up and Meanwhile activations

Since 2008, owners of empty property in England and Wales have been liable to pay the full business rates on their property. However, business rate mitigation has been introduced to ease the burden on landlords with vacant premises. If empty and not a listed building, a property is exempt from business rates for a three-month period from the date on which the property became empty. If the property is classified as industrial the business rate exemption is extended to a six-month period. The empty property must be occupied for at least six weeks before any rate exemption period can begin.

Approaching landlords with vacant properties who will likely be paying business rates on them, and offering to unlock business rates relief in return for a peppercorn rent and a small amount of sponsorship for pop-up activity within the space is a tried and proven way of activating meanwhile opportunities.

BRITISH COUNCIL

Key Projects: Culture, public health and environmental projects

The British Council has a wealth of resources and funding opportunities that are focused on finding new ways of connecting with and understanding each other through the arts and building creative and collaborative global communities that inspire innovation, knowledge, prosperity and peace, believing that connections we build through arts and culture transform lives and create positive change.

The British Council deliver this through three main programme of work, which include:

- Cultural exchange: supporting organisations and artists to build networks and collaborate and bring artists and audiences together to share and exchange creative ideas
- Creative economy: working with creative leaders to support sustainable and inclusive creative economies
- Culture responds to global challenges: Through the transformative power of arts and culture to change mindsets, supporting more connected and equal societies and the protection and promotion of cultural expression, diversity and heritage at risk

It is recommended that a strong relationship with the British Council is nurtured, enabling Ilfracombe to benefit from the existing research, resources, opportunities and funding programmes on offer in this area.

NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

Key Projects: Community focused projects

The Community Lottery Fund is the most common source of public funding for projects that show the potential for tangible benefits to people's health, wellbeing, sense of community and overall opportunity. Funds tend to be targeted towards projects that are addressing real community need and therefore should be reserved for activities within the Cultural Plan that are significantly beneficial to direct user groups in the community and meet the following needs:

- Bring people together and build strong relationships in and across communities
- Improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- Help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage

The National Lottery Community Fund includes a variety of programmes, including short term projects under £20,000.00 through the Awards for All fund, to partnership programmes for over £20,000.00 for up to five years. All programmes will benefit from a community led approach, ensuring that the community have involved people and communities from the start, build on people's strengths and are connected to their communities.

It is recommended that the National Lottery Community Fund programmes are explored in detail and opportunities are developed in line with the Cultural Plan.

DIRECT SPONSORSHIP

Key Projects: Events greening and public art

Sponsorship can be an effective method of generating funds for projects where having your company's name attached offers significant PR and marketing benefits such as large community events and public artworks.

The rise in a commitment to ESG further supports a sponsorship model with companies looking towards activities and events that champion community development and public benefit as an area in which their support is valued and generates positive PR.

However, it is vital that sponsorships are mutually beneficial and in line with not only a company's brand values, but also those of the cultural programme or event itself to be both successful and sustainable.

Timing is also key as most companies will set their sponsorship strategy at the start of the financial year.

UK RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Key Projects: Research projects including Culture and Wellbeing

Launched in April 2018, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Their mission is to convene, catalyse and invest in close collaboration with others to build a thriving, inclusive research and innovation system that connects discovery to prosperity and public good.

They offer funding and support across all academic disciplines and industrial areas from the medical and biological sciences to astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences, and the arts and humanities.

Funding opportunities range from Future Leader Fellowships which offer long term funding to support research and career development through to the Strength in Places fund which uses research and innovation to drive regional economic growth in the UK.

HISTORIC ENGLAND

Key Projects: Historic Buildings

Historic England's grant priorities include activities and projects which strengthen the ability of the sector to reduce or avoid risk to the historic environment by understanding, managing and conserving.

The Heritage Protection Commissions and Capacity Building fund supports projects that develop sector capacity, capability and resilience, and/or help more diverse people engage with heritage and the historic environment. They must also reflect priorities outlined in Historic England's Corporate Plan which are:

- Climate Change – ensuring our heritage plays an important role in the fight to limit climate change and its impact on people and places.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – delivering on our commitment and Vision that heritaGe should be for everyone.
- Wellbeing – our new strategy will guide our next steps on the value of heritage to people's wellbeing.
- Levelling Up – aligned with the government's priority to ensure equity of opportunity, wherever people are.

Ilfracombe Conservation Area is listed within the Heritage at Risk register that is the focal point of Historic England funding. As such they should be approached to consider a large strategic bid under the Regional Capacity Building Programme for activities that would build up the capacity and commitment of local communities to champion the conservation and enhancement of their own local historic environments.

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APPENDICES

RESEARCH & INSIGHT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Things Made Public on behalf of North Devon Council. It draws out key themes drawn from a review of policy, heritage, demographics, cultural activity and place analysis. It aims to give a contextual focus to the development of a Cultural Plan for Ilfracombe by emphasising notable features of the town that differentiate it from other places, making recommendations for how these features should inform a cultural vision for the town.

As such this should not be used as a comprehensive research summary, rather a document that can stimulate further thought about needs, challenges and opportunities in the town and how these can be best leveraged. These will be further developed through stakeholder engagement, a spatial review of current and future projects and assets in the town, and action planning culminating in a final Cultural Plan for Ilfracombe.

The report is split into two sections. The first section focuses on 6 themes that we have found particularly notable from a cultural perspective in our initial research and the role they might play in the shaping of a Cultural Plan. The second section gives a broader overview of economic, social and cultural challenges and opportunities of the town which can help place the Cultural Plan in the context of wider social and economic priorities.

LANDSCAPE, ADVENTURE & THE SEA

From its origins in the time of the Dumnonii Celts, the character and culture of Ilfracombe has been shaped by the nature and fortunes of its relationship with a landscape and sea more wild and dramatic than most places in the UK. The cliffs of the Torrs, the sleeping elephant of Hillsborough, Lantern Hill, Compass Torr and Capstone Hill form an awe-inspiring setting. When combined with one of the largest tidal ranges in the world, it is hard to think of a coastal location in Britain that better showcases the powerful forces of nature.

The Torrs created a natural harbour in the Bristol Channel that has been fundamental to the formation and growth of the town. Its role as a safe port, aided by the oldest still functioning lighthouse in the country at St Nicholas Chapel from the 15th century onwards, helped it grow as a site of cross-channel trade, where ships would seek refuge from the dangers of the sea including marauders and pirates that would often base themselves on nearby Lundy Island. The isolated location also provided refuge for those fleeing danger on land including William de Tracy following the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170. Thus the social history began to reflect the romance and drama of its landscape.

Throughout the 18th Century in particular, a number of significant adventurers and naval officers grew up in Ilfracombe including John Bowen, founder of the first British settlement in Tasmania; James Bowen, master of the HMS Queen Charlotte at the Glorious First of June during the French Revolutionary Wars; Richard Bowen; James Thomas Stukley; and John Richards Lapenotière who conveyed the news of victory and the death of Admiral Nelson to Britain after the Battle of Trafalgar.

Perhaps it was this context that began to inspire adventurous visitors to the town including JMW Turner in 1811 and author Frances Burney in 1817. George Eliot would visit with her lover in 1853, taking advantage of long walks and investigations of tide pools



for species of seaweed which she wrote about in her Ilfracombe Journal. She would almost certainly have been acquainted with Ilfracombe resident Charlotte Chanter, the writer, investigator of ferns of the area and sister of author Charles Kingsley. As Victorian Ilfracombe expanded, it enjoyed a blossoming of cultural life, producing writers such as Philip James Bailey, John Coulson Kernahan and Emilia Frances Strong, as well as later, Henry Williamson, author of *Tarka the Otter* and arguably the town's most famous figure.

This interest in the town expanded once Ilfracombe opened up to travellers when first Barnstaple in 1854, then Ilfracombe in 1874 were connected to the train network. Ilfracombe had already been growing as a destination for health tourism in the 1780s, when a journey from Exeter to Barnstaple alone took 12 hours, Ilfracombe was already being mentioned in travel guides for the 'conveniency of its bathing machines' that would allow wealthy visitors to enjoy the cleansing health benefits of seawater. In 1823, in an effort to capitalise on this growing opportunity, the Ilfracombe Sea Bathing

Company formed, and a team of hundreds of Welsh miners were hired to spend two years carving tunnels through the Ilfracombe hillside, providing access to Crewkhorne Cove by foot and carriage, later building three tidal pools that would allow for segregated male (nude) and female bathing. The Tunnels remains one of the more astonishing coastal attractions in the country.



The railway itself represented a battle against the landscape and topography as the hilly terrain created almost impossible gradients for the trains. An earlier rejection on the grounds of safety of a proposal for the trainline by parliament in 1863 caused riots in the town. But once created it would transform Ilfracombe from a hidden gem of adventurous and well-to-do Victorians into a mass tourist destination that would define its economy for the next century. However, despite the changes this would bring, the dynamic relationship between people, sea and landscape would remain a fundamental constant, from the maritime and fishing industries to the growth of watersports and surf culture.

Today Ilfracombe has much to offer for those who want to experience a more dramatic and dynamic engagement with nature and the sea. Whether it be coasteering or swimming with seals, exploring the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or taking trips out to Lundy Island, the town offers far more than lying on the beach. Combining these contemporary experiences with a strong connection with the deep heritage of travel, sea and adventure that Ilfracombe's history represents provides a compelling narrative for the town that can appeal to a broad, young and creative demographic.

At the same time, nature and the landscape also continue to pose ongoing and emerging challenges to the town, not least the threatening impacts of climate change that include coastal erosion, the threats of flooding particularly along the route of the East Wilder Brook, and the potential for extreme weather events. Each of these pose limits on development and investment. It is therefore unsurprising that the town exhibits strong engagement with environmental issues evidenced by initiatives like the Earth Repair Shop.

The investment in a new Watersports Hub in Ilfracombe with £1.5m from Heart of the South West LEP; £1.35m from the Coastal Communities Fund, and £130,000 from Sport England also show how an active relationship with the landscape can be a driving force of community uplift. With future prospects around maritime innovation, tidal power and green energy, there has never been a better time to draw upon this connection of people and nature.

Points for Further Research and Development of the Cultural Plan:

- Stakeholder and community engagement can help us understand whether local people identify Ilfracombe with a strong sense of connection with landscape, the sea and the themes of heritage and adventure we have identified in the desk research.
- Investigation of comparator destinations can offer insights into how Ilfracombe best leverages its fascinating past and contemporary landscape within its brand and cultural identity. This should also link with the opportunities around culture and landscape identified within the Northern Devon Culture Strategy including integration of strategic cultural programmes into the Northern Devon Biosphere, promoting more cultural activity in outdoor locations and linking culture with activities of environmental protection.
- Engagement with Ilfracombe Museum can explore the role it plays in bringing to life the heritage and stories of the town, not just within the museum itself but across the town.

TOURISM

It is impossible to overstate the impact that the arrival of rail travel and later disappearance of rail travel had on Ilfracombe. In 1801, Ilfracombe was already a visitor destination for a minority of monied families, but its population was still only 1,800. By 1921, the economic boom that accompanied its growth as a tourist destination had seen its population increase sixfold to 11,772.

The trajectory of Ilfracombe's tourism follows the wider trend of British seaside destinations. Initial visitors were heavily driven by the reputed health benefits of sea-bathing. But the combination of a growing middle-class created by the Industrial Revolution and most significantly the onset of the railway opened up the coast to everyone.



In Ilfracombe, this triggered a period of sustained development, beginning with an increase in residential properties around the new Tunnels resort and the elegant terrace properties that characterise the town today, followed by a rapid expansion of hotels from the 1860s onwards including the iconic Ilfracombe Hotel in 1867 which sought to capitalise on the increasing number of visitors arriving by both rail and steamboat every summer. Accommodation that would allow guests to bring their own servants gives an indication of how Ilfracombe remained a destination for largely wealthier echelons

of society at this time. This is further indicated by the creation of the elegant Victoria Pavilion in 1888. Designed by local man W. H. Gould, and completed in 1888, it was built from glass and iron in the style of Crystal Palace which housed the Great Exhibition and contained a concert hall that was expanded in 1925 into a 750-seat venue.

By the turn of the century Ilfracombe was receiving around 160,000 paddle steamer visitors per year whilst the Ilfracombe Express would bring tourists directly from Paddington Station in under 7 hours. The Ilfracombe Boat Express from Cardiff to Barry Pier opened Ilfracombe up to more working class tourists from Bristol, Cardiff and Port Talbot, taking advantage of the new leisure opportunities of the weekend and the recently enforced Bank Holiday. As wealthier tourists began to explore the glamorous options of the European Riviera, the character of Ilfracombe tourism began to shift.

During the interwars years, mass tourism to Ilfracombe hit its peak. The creation of the package holiday and the new opportunities of coach travel had further expanded the accessibility of the town. A 7-day Thomas Cook trip from Birmingham to Ilfracombe in 1928 including rail travel and board cost just £6, the equivalent of 18 day's wages for a skilled tradesman. Residences that had been favoured by colonial retirees in the Victorian period started to be converted into hotels and boarding houses. By the 1950s tourism was so substantial that local businesses began advertising in Manchester and Liverpool for staff as local working populations weren't sufficient to cover the demand created every summer. At peak periods, each Saturday would see as many as 10,000 visitors arriving into Ilfracombe Train Station.

But the decline of tourism was sudden and substantial. Package holidays began to open up cheap European travel to working class populations through the 50s and 60s eroding the visitor base of the town. The declining and seasonal usage of the Ilfracombe train line made it a target for the widespread cuts to the train network outlined in the Beeching report of 1963, leading to its closure in 1969. With the loss of rail, Ilfracombe tourism became more reliant on the growing coach trip market of the 1970s and 80s along with the emergence of caravan holidays, representing the lower cost end of the tourism market. Gradually, hotels began to close and be converted into residential properties. The Victoria Pavilion, a symbol of Ilfracombe's tourism peak, was partly destroyed by fire in the 1980s and was finally demolished in 1994 to be replaced by the Landmark Theatre in 1997.

Tourism continues to be at the heart of Ilfracombe's identity and economy, with 22.5% of local employment related in some respect to the visitor economy compared to 14.4% in Devon, as well as 40% of the town's businesses. Broadening the scope and attracting more upmarket tourism is Objective 3 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan and has had significant influence on plans for the regeneration of the seafront in particular.

In this regard there is much to be hopeful about. Ilfracombe's independent arts offer, boosted by the association with world-famous contemporary artist Damien Hirst and his sculpture Verity, is attracting a wider range of audiences to the town, as is an increasingly diverse food offer. The increased proportion of people vacationing within the UK in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic helped Ilfracombe experience the 10th best 'bounce-back' of all UK coastal towns with approximately 1.1m visitors in 2021/22 up from 720,000 the previous year.



Cultural interest in coastal communities has helped many traditional tourism hotspots to diversify their offer to embrace a combination of heritage, culture and nature, expanding the tourism season beyond the summer as well as bringing an increase in niche markets that are more likely to support a diversity of local businesses.

This doesn't just matter for the economic prospects of Ilfracombe. The heritage of tourism has an important social resonance for many of the town's residents, some of whom chose to retire to Ilfracombe influenced by happy memories of holidays by the sea. Others have generations of family who have operated hotels, attractions and other businesses linked to the town's tourism and the perceived decline in tourism has a direct impact on their sense of pride in the place and overall well being.

There is a great opportunity for Ilfracombe to move beyond the tourism decline of the latter 20th century and strike the balance between pride in the rich role it had in the golden age of seaside tourism, whilst avoiding an unhealthy or unappealing level of nostalgia. In recent years there have been attempts in some seaside towns to 'recapture the spirit' of the traditional seaside resort, with mixed results. The initial failed reopening of Dreamland in Margate in 2015 was a case in point, failing to attract anticipated interest in its first opening, before later becoming successful with the incorporation of more contemporary elements like a music venue, food and beverage that integrated with the traditional seaside fair appeal.

Points for Further Research and Development of the Cultural Plan:

- The cultural plan will need to align with the broader strategy for tourism in the town including how Ilfracombe is branded, the strategy for improving accommodation, the calendar of activity for the town and the target audiences.
- The social history of seaside holidays in Ilfracombe is perhaps more important than the memorabilia of the time. If the stories of why people came to Ilfracombe and what it meant to them can be woven into the identity of the town, it will carry more substance than a simple pastiche of holidays by the sea.
- Successful coastal tourism towns have tended to benefit from focusing on raising the overall experience of their town and community rather than fixating on 'big ticket' tourist attractions of locations. Throwing off the image of being 'fading coastal towns' have in turn made them more attractive to visitors. The cultural plan will need to make the case for wider community and place uplift as a catalyst for a stronger and more resilient tourism sector rather than necessarily the other way around.

A CONTEMPORARY CLUSTER

In 2012, the 20.25m sculpture of Verity was unveiled on the pier at the entrance to Ilfracombe harbour. The statue by world famous artist Damien Hirst, depicting a pregnant woman holding aloft a sword, with half of the body showing her internal anatomy, sparked national interest and controversy, with some declaring the statue an eyesore, whilst others flooded to the town to see arguably the most daring example of contemporary public art since Antony Gormley's Angel of the North.



The hysteria around the sculpture masked a deeper story of a strong and growing visual and performing scene within the town. The beauty and drama of the North Devon landscape had long been a draw for artists since the 18th Century. The growth of tourism gradually supported a range of arts and crafts businesses who were able to benefit from selling works and objects during the high season, whilst enjoying the relative space, time and affordability of the town during off-season to develop work.

This also linked with deep North Devon associations with craft and making that included ceramics, glass making and milliners that evolved into a strong independent making culture in places like Clovelly, Barnstaple and Bideford that continues to this day. Over 400 independent artists and makers across Northern Devon have been identified by regional network ArtMakers, representing an extremely high proportion of dedicated

artists to total population. This making strength is further exemplified by regional cultural centres such as the Burton @ Bideford which specialises in showcasing the contemporary art and craft expertise of the region.

This strength is clearly evident in Ilfracombe today. The 2023 edition of the annual Ilfracombe Art Trail featured 70 artists exhibiting work across 48 venues, including some of the 11 dedicated commercial art galleries within the town. This suggests a notable cluster of activity, evidenced by the fact that in the 2021 Census, 1.42% of residents listed having an Artistic or Literary Occupation, well above the 1.25% national average.

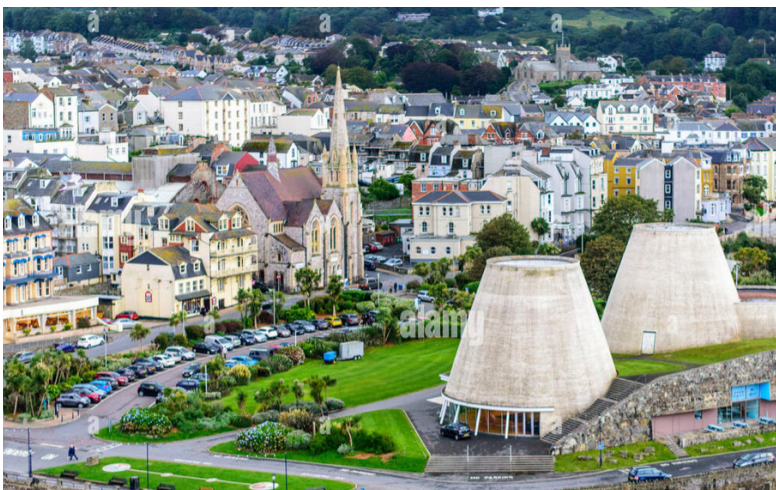
The range of these artists, galleries and works is substantial. Vandal Gallery specialise in promoting works by contemporary established and emerging artists like Emma Gibbons. Magenta Fine Art showcase and sell innovative artworks from across the world, whilst Echo Beach offer landscape inspired works by artists like Mike Bernard. Ilfracombe also boasts a strong Street Art scene, supported by vibrant skate and surf cultures exemplified by Silk Crystal Street Art. Many of these galleries, such as the recently opened Aluna Collective, are run by local artists themselves, providing a platform to sell their own works as well as those of other local artists.

This contemporary arts scene is complemented by evidence of an equally thriving amateur arts and crafts culture, seen in programmes such as Paint N Spin, amateur art classes and a high level of young people taking Art and Design subjects at GCSE, 29.5% compared with a 27% national average.

The combination of these two elements is perhaps best exemplified by Ilfracombe Art and Craft Society, established for over 40 years and occupying an exhibition space on The Promenade which they use to display a mix of local seascapes, harbour scenes and craft items by local artists that welcomes 40,000 visitors per year.

Beyond visual arts, Ilfracombe's Landmark Theatre provides the town with a performing arts venue with a strong creative vision and reach that goes far beyond typical regional theatres. As part of Landmark Theatres Ltd it forms a network of regional theatres, under the umbrella of an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (representing cultural organisations of regional or national importance who receive 3 year core funding from the Arts Council), strong links with the Selladoor Worldwide international production

company, the National Theatre, Birmingham Royal Ballet and a range of funded touring production companies. This makes the Landmark far more open to close engagement with local community performing arts groups and festivals as well as being able to draw a more contemporary and dynamic variety of new writing and touring shows than other theatres might.



This asset combines with a rich local grassroots performing arts scene centred around the SPACE, based in a former methodist church which offers rehearsal and performance space for local music, dance, drama and musical theatre production companies like Small Pond.

What is unclear is the resilience and support systems for this rich artistic scene. The Ilfracombe Art Trail provides the clearest example of integrated and collaborative approaches to showcasing the town's rich art and culture offer. Artist galleries are listed within the Visit Ilfracombe page and the Ilfracombe Coastal Art Town Instagram page offers an overarching celebration of the local arts scene. However, searches for Ilfracombe Art are dominated by Damien Hirst and Verity, hiding the richer picture that lies underneath. The fact that no artists, galleries or studios were involved in the Devon Open House programme suggests a disconnection with the wider North Devon arts scene.

Similarly, there is little evidence of local artists and independent art organisations, with the exception of the Landmark Theatre, accessing the support of national funders such as Arts Council England. This aligns with research by regional arts and maker network ArtMakers which highlighted several challenges for the regional independent arts scene including isolation and lack of coordination or linked support of independent artists; lack of knowledge in how to access funding and development support; and lack of access to broader business support, meaning most artists in the region live fairly precarious lives with low incomes making them reliant on additional jobs to survive.

Towns like Folkestone have shown how a thriving and connected independent arts scene can transform the tourism, creative industries and wider placemaking prospects of a place if it suitably coordinated and supported. It is clear that the raw ingredients are in place to achieve this in Ilfracombe and it should be a key objective of the Cultural Plan to identify opportunities to shape and direct these.

Points for Further Research and Development of the Cultural Plan:

- Engagement with local artists as well as coordinating programmes like Ilfracombe Art Trail and ArtMakers will be key to identifying barriers and opportunities for better supporting and making the most of the town's independent contemporary art scene.
- The Cultural Plan will need to direct key national funders like Arts Council England as to the key investment priorities for supporting contemporary art in the town and the social and economic case for this investment which can help more local artists and organisations to successfully apply for funding.
- The Cultural Plan offers an opportunity to explore the potential for large contemporary art projects capable of attracting international audiences such as major festivals, biennials or longer term public art programmes.

COMMUNITY & COMBATING ISOLATION

One of the fundamental roles of art and culture in society is its power to bring people together, create a strong sense of community and improve people's wellbeing through a stronger sense of purpose and reducing loneliness.

There is strong evidence of this happening within Ilfracombe. One Ilfracombe, a community development organisation which brings together partner agencies and independent members, to support collaboration in the delivery of services in a better and more joined up way, were pioneers in the UK for social prescribing, the methods of directing patients towards social, cultural and community activities as a more effective preventative health solution than standard clinical treatments. Social prescribers signpost clients (referred either via their GP, a partner organisation or self-referral) to social activities as well as a wide range of other support services. With funding via Primary Care Networks, One Ilfracombe now includes a wellbeing team of 10 covering Ilfracombe.

Community organising also has a strong impact on the local cultural offer. For many years the Space, operating out of the former Emmanuel Methodist Church, has provided a rehearsal and performance resource for a strong local amateur performing arts scene including Small Pond community theatre and singing company, Studio Theatre Ilfracombe, and Ilfracombe Musical Productions.

The large number of volunteers supporting Ilfracombe Museum, grassroots organisations like Ilfracombe Holy Trinity Graveyard Group, the Ilfracombe Victorian and Steampunk Celebration and the Ilfracombe Maritime Festival are examples of local communities coming together to celebrate and protect the heritage and culture of the town.

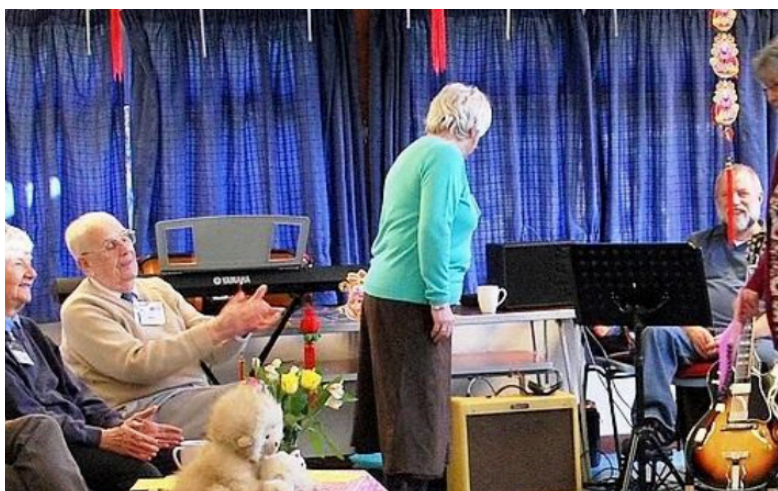
The importance of this work cannot be underestimated given the risk factors within



Ilfracombe around social isolation, health and wellbeing. According to the 2021 census 37.3% of Ilfracombe households are one-person households, significantly higher than the rest of North Devon (30.7%) and England (30.1%). This includes 845 people aged 66 or over who live alone. This also includes a large number of people living in poor quality privately rented Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) who are often individuals with significant social and health issues who have moved into the town from outside and have few social links within the town, making them further at risk of social isolation. 45% of residents do not live with a partner or spouse.

High levels of single-person living are potentially exacerbated by spatial isolation. Despite being a rural isolated town, 26.2% of households do not own a car or van. Given the limitations of public transport this restricts the ability to access regional cultural, retail and social hubs. The topology of Ilfracombe, with its steep streets, creates a further barrier, particularly for a place where 22.8% of people are classified as disabled under the Equality act compared with 17.3% nationally, and 9.8% of residents indicate that this disability limits day-to-day activities a lot.

High levels of disability not only carry a risk of isolation for the people who experience them, but can also carry hidden effects and risks of isolation for others. Almost 1 in 10 people in the town provide some degree of unpaid care to a family member or loved one, higher than the national average. Most significantly this includes a reported 338 people dedicating 50 or more hours per week unpaid to caring for loved ones. This level of unpaid caregiving can mean people lack both the time, ability to leave the house and financial stability to go out and engage in cultural activities.



Ability to engage in community and cultural activity can also be limited by work circumstances. Large numbers of people in Ilfracombe are required to commute out for work with 26% travelling 10 km or more to their place of work, leaving little time during the week for social and community activity. Financial pressures brought on by the cost of living crisis also tend to lead to a reduction in people's ability and willingness to dedicate time to voluntary activity.

As such, whilst Ilfracombe displays an admirable range of community and grassroots cultural initiatives, the fragility of this shouldn't be underestimated, nor should its importance to the community health of the town. For example, it appears that the Victorian and Steampunk Festival was not able to take place in 2023 due to insufficient people volunteering for the committee to make it viable.

Increasing the number of people participating regularly in arts and culture, particularly the most vulnerable in society, is a central pillar of the Creative People Outcome of Arts Council England's 10-year Let's Create Strategy. Several specialised funding streams have been established in recent years to support this, including funds focusing on supporting creative participation through social prescribing, by connecting cultural, community and health service providers; and the Volunteering Futures programme to better link together volunteering opportunities across community, sport and cultural sectors.

Given the strong coordinating role of One Ilfracombe, the range of existing community activity within the town, and the clear evidence of need, there should be a strong case for Ilfracombe to seek funding to explore innovative approaches to achieving this when future rounds of funding come up.

Points for Further Research and Development of the Cultural Plan:

- Unpicking the particular health and social isolation challenges of the town and where culture is and isn't well placed to support these should be a key priority of the engagement process.
- Engagement with the voluntary and grassroots community arts sector should focus on barriers and needs, such as numbers of people willing to organise and run activities, spaces and infrastructure to run activity and funding.
- Investigations into the needs of the voluntary and grassroots sector should be complemented by engagement of residents, particularly to understand the level of demand and key barriers to volunteering and cultural participation in the town. In line with the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy, innovative approaches to digital engagement should be explored to mitigate the challenges of geographical isolation.

YOUNG PEOPLE & OPPORTUNITY



The Ilfracombe Strategic Plan is striking in how it places schools and young people at the forefront of its Objective 13 'Raise the Socio Economic Profile of the town' as well as Objective 14 'Help young people understand their value in the community and play their part in shaping the future of our Town'. This includes highlighting the importance of education, the attractiveness of good schools to prospective people moving to the area, and the community role of the physical infrastructure of schools such as Ilfracombe Academy in particular. It also acknowledges the need to promote shared equity housing as a means of delivering more affordable housing for young people wishing to stay in the area and thereby support the resilience of a town with an increasingly ageing population.

There is a clear logic to this. Whilst under 19s make up just 20% of the local population, compared with 23% nationally, they have an outsized role in the future of the town. The working age population of Ilfracombe in 2021 was 55.2%, lower than the national average of 58.5% and highlights a reduction since 2011 of 1.7%. Numbers of residents in the 20 to 35 age range are particularly low, representing a long term threat to the economic resilience of the town.

This is not unusual for rural towns far from universities and major cities, which typically experience a dip in population after school as children move elsewhere to pursue higher education or economic opportunities. However, ensuring Ilfracombe is attractive to young people who choose not to pursue higher education, wish to return to the town following graduation and people with young families, is vital to lifting the overall working age population of the town. This is directly linked to the experience young people have growing up in the town.

On the surface Ilfracombe has many of the ingredients to be a great place to grow up. The outdoor lifestyle including watersports, surf and skate culture, contemporary art scene, and community identity all provide the basis for a good childhood and youth.

However, the town experiences several challenges which undermine this. Overall levels of deprivation create large numbers of children in poverty, including 4 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA), statistical geographies of 1,000 - 2,000 people, in the highest 20% for child and youth deprivation in England.

Ilfracombe Academy, the towns only secondary education provider, in 2023 received a 'Requires Improvement' report from OFSTED with average Progress 8 scores of -0.51 (worse than the -0.13 Devon average), just 31% of pupils receiving Grade 5 or higher in English and Maths GCSEs, compared to 50% nationally, and an average A Level points score of 35.56 compared to the 38.82 Devon average.

Primary education is stronger within a 3-mile radius of the town having a Good or Outstanding OFSTED rating and progress scores in reading, writing and maths all above average despite a larger than average proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals (39% vs 25% nationally) and pupils requiring SEN support (22.6% vs 13% nationally).

Demographic and economic circumstances are also likely to shape young people's experiences and perceptions of their town. Underlying economic challenges of low wages, seasonal work and limited prospects for jobs that offer clear career progression will often lead to young people seeing their only opportunities in life being to leave the town they grew up in. This is compounded by the rising cost of suitable housing and lack of quality affordable housing, meaning even if young people choose to stay, they are faced with few prospects for owning a home.



At a cultural level, the growing ageing population can also lead to negative perceptions of a place as being 'old' and 'boring', compounded by a sense of geographic isolation that can make young people feel cut off from the cultural and social life that larger towns and cities enjoy. This was a strong trend picked up by consultation with young people for the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy providing evidence of young people feeling ignored. All of this leads to young people seeing their place as somewhere they need to escape from, not somewhere they would like to stay in or return to.

Ability to engage in community and cultural activity can also be limited by work circumstances. Large numbers of people in Ilfracombe are required to commute out for work with 26% travelling 10 km or more to their place of work, leaving little time during the week for social and community activity. Financial pressures brought on by the cost of living crisis also tend to lead to a reduction in people's ability and willingness to dedicate time to voluntary activity.

As such, whilst Ilfracombe displays an admirable range of community and grassroots cultural initiatives, the fragility of this shouldn't be underestimated, nor should its importance to the community health of the town. For example, it appears that the Victorian and Steampunk Festival was not able to take place in 2023 due to insufficient people volunteering for the committee to make it viable.

Whilst some of these challenges are beyond the scope of this Cultural Plan, culture can play a key role in how involved young people feel in shaping their town, the extent of provision and activities available to young people, and the prospects that young people have to develop creative skills and careers. Arts Council investment programmes like the Local Cultural Education Partnerships and Creativity Collaboratives show there are resources for putting culture and creativity at the heart of wider educational improvements.

The investment in a new Watersports Hub in Ilfracombe has shown how putting young people at the heart of regeneration plans can yield results, and lessons from that experience as well as 'next step' needs can be gathered. This should include the need for provision of low cost and free activities for young people who may not be able to access the benefits of the new centre.



Objective 14 of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan also highlights key areas of focus that can directly translate into the Cultural Plan, including creating platforms for greater youth involvement in decision making around cultural activity, providing advice and help into employment and career routes in the creative sector, improving the quality of things to do and places to go in Ilfracombe, and providing volunteering opportunities. This also closely aligns with the 'Nurturing the Future' priority of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy.

It is clear that young people in Ilfracombe are disproportionately creative, as evidenced by large numbers studying creative subjects, the vibrant skate culture of the town and organisations like the nearby Saunton Studios. A 'whole town' approach to making Ilfracombe the best possible place to be a young person could reap substantial benefits not only for its young people, but the overall community and cultural life of the town.

Points for Further Research and Development of the Cultural Plan:

- Engagement with young people should be a key priority for the next phase of the Cultural Plan. This should integrate with existing fora and engagement activities within the town to ensure that any proposals for raising the involvement of young people in cultural programming aligns with wider strategies for supporting young people.
- The Landmark Theatre provides a key focal point for youth arts activity as the town's only regularly funded National Portfolio Organisation. Understanding how young people fit within their current 3-year activity plan and how this fits into a broader picture of young arts provision will be important to identify opportunities and gaps.
- The Cultural Plan should draw on national best practices in the promotion and celebration of youth creativity, particularly in identifying effective mechanisms for linking young people, schools, community, cultural sector and creative industries in a holistic and coordinated approach to youth development.

A CONNECTED TOWN EXPERIENCE

This Cultural Plan sits within the context of wider regeneration plans for Ilfracombe which recognise that the structural challenges and opportunities of the town can only be addressed if a holistic spatial approach is taken to regeneration that incorporates both ‘hardware’ improvements such as infrastructure and public realm, as well as ‘software’ projects and partnerships. These regeneration priorities are set out within the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan 2015-25 and the ongoing Ilfracombe Regeneration Action Plan conducted by Hardisty Jones which in turn have built on master planning work for the Seafront and Harbour by Terence O’Rourke in 2009.

In recent decades much of the spatial and regeneration role of culture within Ilfracombe has centred around the seafront and harbour area. This is understandable given their importance as the heart of the leisure offer of the town, significance in attracting tourists, and existing cultural infrastructure in the form of the Landmark Theatre and Ilfracombe Museum.

Since the completion of the Landmark Theatre to replace the former Victoria Pavilion in 1997, a number of culture and leisure-focused schemes and master plans have been proposed for the seafront. Notable examples include closer integration of Ilfracombe Museum and the Landmark Theatre to create a re-invented cultural centre within the 2009 Sea Change plan and a partial recreation of the former Pavilion to offer a new home for Ilfracombe Museum. Proposals for the harbour have been less specific in regards to culture beyond seeking to increase and enhance the retail and leisure uses. Both sites have been mooted as options for a Zipwire project that would offer visitors an exhilarating aerial experience.



It has only been more recently, within the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan and Regeneration Action Plan, that the role of culture in knitting together disconnected parts of the town, and in particular raising the prospects of the High Street have been identified. This ranges from the need to uplift signage, shopfronts and overall quality of the public realm through a consistent design approach; encouraging a ‘cafe culture’ through pedestrianisation; exploring cultural uses for empty premises; potential for street art along Fore Street to improve connections between the harbour and the high street.

This shift in focus is reflected at the national scale where integrating more cultural and community activity into high streets, encouraging a permissive approach to evening and night time economy and drawing out heritage to strengthen the visual identity of town centres are seen as key mechanisms for addressing the general reduction of traditional retail.

As the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan points out, Ilfracombe is battling a perception that the town has become “shabby” due to an increase in empty High Street shop fronts and key development sites lying derelict or dormant. So whilst ambitious plans to make the harbour and seafront distinctive and attractive, they are unlikely to achieve a sustainable improvement in the quality of tourism if the centre of the town seems neglected.



Folkestone in Kent is a good example of a town which took a ‘high street first’ approach to its regeneration, concentrating investment and cultural activity in the lower cost high street and town centre in order to build up its attractiveness to visitors and new residents. Before leveraging that uplift to attract high investment into its more valuable waterfront areas.

The Our Cultural Hubs priority of the Northern Devon Cultural Strategy outlines how towns should seek to embed culture in a holistic and spatial way across their towns in order to create ‘whole town experiences’ rather than disconnected set pieces of cultural activity. This includes putting culture at the heart of place partnerships to integrate culture into regeneration and town development; making optimum use of existing, owned assets and buildings; relationships with landlords to aid the expansion of cultural infrastructure within towns; and creating the conditions for attracting and supporting cultural uses within public realm areas of town.

There is a wealth of opportunities within Ilfracombe to leverage culture for ‘soft regeneration’ from its strong visual arts scene, to organisations such as Ilfracombe Museum seeking long term sustainable locations through to community and cultural festivals. Linking these to the wider regeneration plans of the town and ensuring diverse partners beyond the cultural sector understand the value of culture to those plans will be a key priority of the Cultural Plan.

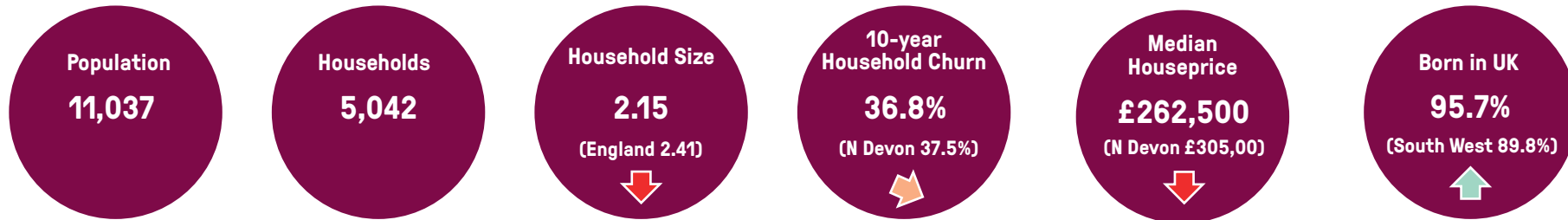
Points for Further Research and Development of the Cultural Plan:

- Stakeholder engagement will need to draw out key opportunity sites for culture including potential locations for Ilfracombe Museum, public art opportunities, priority locations for supporting evening and night-time economy, and priority locations where culture can support the strength of the high street.
- The Cultural Plan should integrate with any plans for coordinated design approaches to signage, branding and marketing to help create a distinctive Ilfracombe visual identity.
- An understanding of locations used by town festivals will be needed to explore the full potential for outdoor cultural activity as well as any known barriers to permissions that might limit this opportunity.

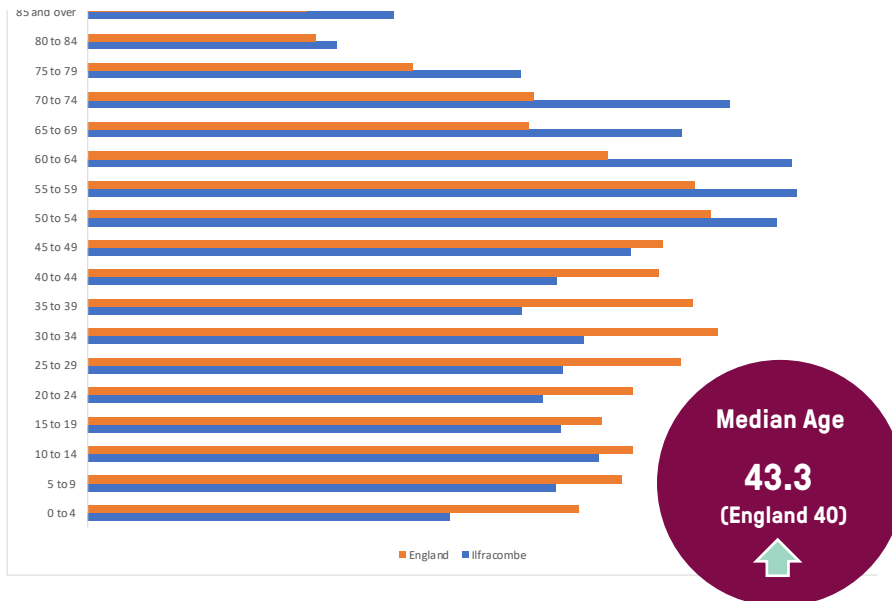
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & CULTURAL CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Ilfracombe Cultural Plan needs to be considered in relation to the underlying social and economic needs and opportunities of the town as well as its cultural potential. Culture has the power to deliver wider social and economic benefits to Ilfracombe, and communicating these to stakeholders outside the cultural sector is vital to embedding and aligning cultural development across activity in the town. Below we outline some of the key challenges and opportunities identified through our baseline data review and policy analysis that will underpin the direction of the Cultural Plan.

PEOPLE & COMMUNITY



Age Profile



Mosaic Group

Rural Reality - 45.2%

Households living in affordable properties in village and countryside settings

Country Living - 15.1%

Well-off homeowners in rural areas enjoying the benefits of country life

Transient Renters - 10.6%

Single people renting low cost homes for the short term.

Rental Hubs - 7.6%

Singles renting affordable private flats further away from central amenities

Senior Security - 6.3%

Elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement.

Family Basics - 6.0%

Households bringing up children, who have limited incomes and budget carefully

Vintage Value - 5.9%

Elderly people with limited pension income, mostly living alone

Ageing Population

Census data from 2011 to 2021 shows that Ilfracombe is experiencing a falling population with particular reductions in its working-age population. Residents in the 20 to 35 age bracket are particularly reduced as young people leave the town for educational and career opportunities and don't return. Reversing this decline and encouraging more young people to remain in and move to the town is important for its future vitality. Equally ensuring the town is somewhere that elderly people can lead healthy, active lives is important given the increasing over 65 population.

Deprivation

3 of Ilfracombe's 8 Lower Super Output Areas (geographic subdivisions of 1,000 - 2,000 people) are in the 20% most deprived in the country. High levels of poor housing draw in residents from outside the town with social and health issues, exacerbating deprivation whilst high levels of childhood deprivation create generational issues. Poor quality housing stock and low incomes make the population more vulnerable to fuel poverty and the impacts of the cost of living crisis.

Health and Wellbeing

In Ilfracombe Central Ward the life expectancy at birth is just 71 for men and 79 for women compared with the national level of 78 years for men and 83 years for women. Healthy Life Expectancy at birth is particularly poor for men at just 54 years meaning they can expect to have 9 fewer years of life in good health than the national average.

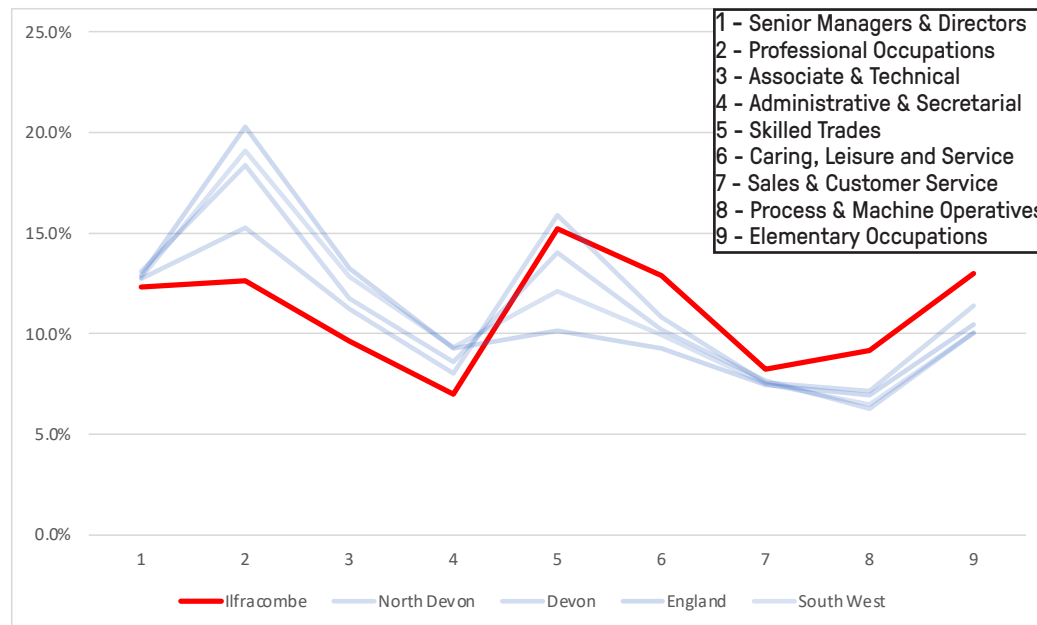
Stable Community Foundation

Despite issues of HMOs and the impact of rising house prices and holiday homes, the overall picture of the town is one of a relatively stable community with lower than average household churn and large numbers of demographically similar people. This suggests that there is a very good possibility for strong community bonds, evidenced by an encouraging number of voluntary groups and community organisations.

THE ECONOMY



Occupations



Key Industries

- C: Manufacturing - 25.4%
- I: Accommodation & Food Services - 17.8%
- N: Administrative & Support Services - 12.7%
- Q: Human Health and Social Work - 11.4%
- P: Education - 6.4%
- F: Construction - 3.2%
- M: Profession, Scientific and Technical - 3.2%
- R: Arts, Entertainment & Recreation - 1.9%

Lack of Good Work

Median wages are lower than average and lead to lower net incomes after housing costs, this is highlighted by the disproportionate proportion of people working in lower skilled elementary and service occupations which are also at greater risk of future automation. Employment is also disproportionately seasonal and part-time due to the size of the tourism sector in particular. This means many jobs don't offer strong career progression opportunities, with the exception of some key local large employers like pharmaceutical and manufacturing companies Pall and TDK.

Skills and Workforce Strength

The combination of lower levels of education amongst the population, a shrinking working age population and a small catchment area for labour means that skill shortages are likely and attracting businesses to the town is more challenging.

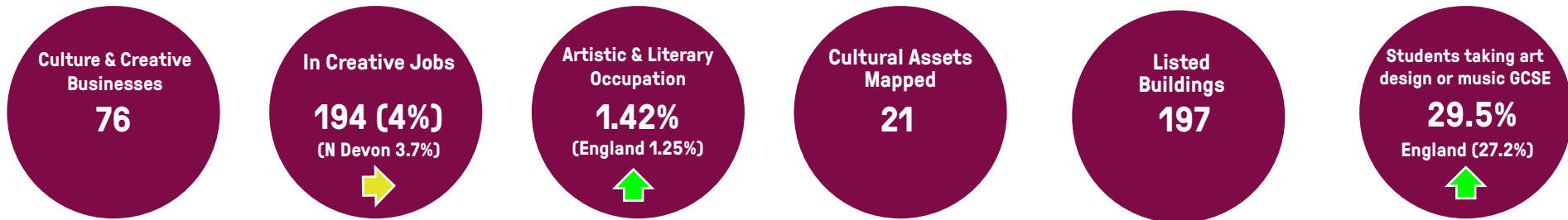
Rising Employment

Despite the above challenges Ilfracombe has seen overall employment growth in the last few years at a rate higher than comparator areas, helping reduce the overall high levels of out-commuting from the town.

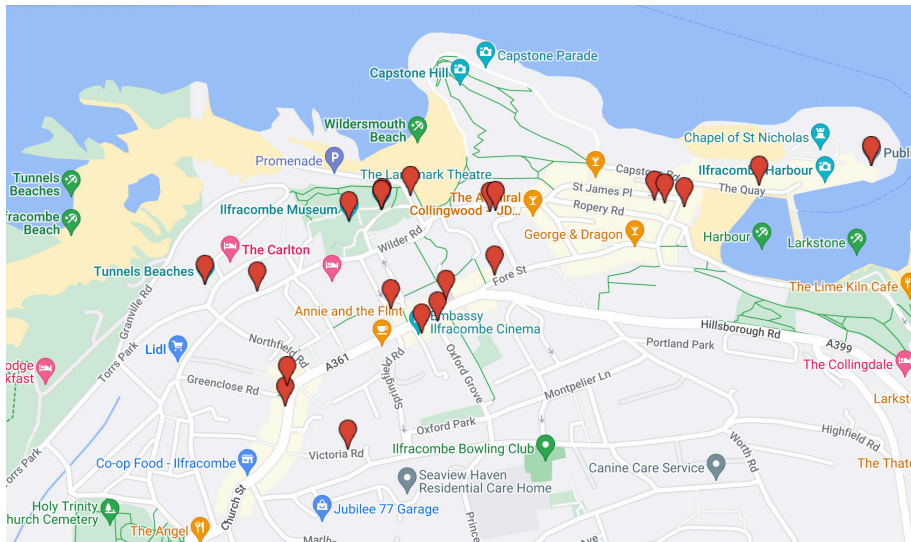
Rise of Remote Working

Currently the level of people working from home in Ilfracombe is relatively low at just 20% compared with 32% nationally, this is backed up by the low numbers of people working in knowledge based sectors that are more likely to support home-working. The rising acceptance and adoption of home-working since the Covid-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to attract more remote knowledge workers to the town. However, this will likely require improvements to the broadband infrastructure with current average internet speeds broadly between 45 - 62 Mbps, half the average speeds in other parts of the country.

CULTURE & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



Cultural Infrastructure



Audience Profile

Trips & Treats - 31.3%

Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends

Up Our Street - 22.5%

Sociable retirees looking for inexpensive, mainstream, local leisure opportunities

Dormitory Dependables - 14.4%

Suburbanites and small towners interested in heritage activities and mainstream arts

Frontline Families - 6.4%

Frugal, semi-urban renting families, light on arts and culture but heavy on community

Home and Heritage - 5.2%

Rural and small town pensioners attracted to daytime activities and historical content

Commuterland Culturebuffs - 3.3%

Affluent, professional and suburbanite keen consumers of traditional culture.

Experience Seekers - 2.7%

Highly active, diverse, social and ambitious regular and eclectic arts engagers

Creative Workforce

There are larger than average numbers of people working in ‘creative jobs’ which encompass positions within creative and non-creative industry businesses in roles such as marketing, design and digital as well as broader creative careers. Levels of people in artistic and literary occupations is particularly high suggesting a larger than average number of artists, writers and other highly creative professionals within the town. Levels of students studying art and design subjects and GCSE and A-Level are also significantly higher than average. The combination of working and student creatives not only provide a good basis for growing the creative economy, but also are more likely to contribute to the cultural life of the town either as audiences or as active participants.

Undersized Creative Industries

Despite its creative workforce, the creative industries sector is notably small in the town, representing just 1.13% of total employment compared to 4.74% in England. This figure does not account for freelancers which might form a larger than average proportion of the local creative sector given Census data of occupations. However, it is clear that levels within the IT and digital sector are particularly small as well as industries such as advertising. Employment in the film, media and production sector is higher than expected for North Devon and potentially offers an opportunity area for growing the creative sector. Given the disproportionate growth of creative industries nationally and the level of high quality, highly productive jobs they produce, identifying mechanisms for growing the creative industries would have a strong impact on the local economy.

Mixed Cultural Infrastructure and Funding

Ilfracombe is fortunate to have the presence of an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) within the town in the form of Selladoor at the Landmark Theatre. NPOs receive regular core funding from Arts Council England with a remit to deliver programmes that grow the cultural life of their area both through programming inspiring cultural events and engaging local communities to expand their own creativity. Beyond the Landmark, despite a significant number of artists, galleries and grassroots arts organisations there is little evidence of cultural funding coming into the town. Addressing the root causes of this and supporting a more mixed cultural ecology will be key to ensuring a sustainable cultural offer.

grassroots arts organisations there is little evidence of cultural funding coming into the town. Addressing the root causes of this and supporting a more mixed cultural ecology will be key to ensuring a sustainable cultural offer.

Promising Audience Profile

The audience profile of Ilfracombe suggests a high proportion of people who prefer to enjoy and benefit from cultural activities locally. Many of these are also at the typically mid-to-lower engagement levels in culture that are most attractive to cultural funders. Key local audience segments as defined by the Audience Agency include:

- ‘Trips and Treats’ defined as audiences who include cultural activities in a broader range of leisure interests and are particularly attracted to mainstream arts and popular culture like musicals and familiar drama;
- ‘Up Our Street’ defined as modestly-incomed groups who engage with the arts infrequently and are most drawn to popular and inexpensive entertainment, as well as museums and heritage sites; and
- ‘Dormitory Dependables’ groups who show a preference for heritage activities, alongside popular and more traditional, mainstream arts.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

At the heart of this work sits the voice of local people. As such, the development of the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan was underpinned by in-depth community consultation including 1-2-1 interviews, interactive workshops, online Ilfracombe Museum Survey and a three day site visit to understand and experience the local landscape.

Working with the client team, a longlist of local stakeholders were identified, ensuring that the following sectors were represented.

- Local Authority
- Art & Culture
- Heritage
- Night Time Economy
- Sport
- Business
- Community
- Health & Wellbeing
- Education
- Environment

ONE TO ONE INTERVIEWS

One-to-one interviews with key stakeholders enabled a deeper dive into cultural DNA of Ilfracombe. The following questions were utilised as a guide to the interview process.

1. Please describe your organisation and your role within it?
2. What have been some of the highlights in your time at the organisation, particular projects, initiatives or achievements either personal or organisational?
3. Please describe some of the partnerships and relationships that are key to your organisation?
4. What are your organisation's main objectives for the next 3 years?
5. What are some of the main challenges or barriers you see to achieving these objectives in the next 3 years?

6. Outside your organisation, what are the key opportunities you see for the cultural sector in Ilfracombe?

7. What are the key challenges for the cultural sector in Ilfracombe?

8. If you could see any project, organisation or activity happen in Ilfracombe what would it be?

Name	Organisation
Lindsay Armstrong	Ilfracombe Museum
Lee Baxendale	SPACE
George Carlo Paat	NDC Harbourmaster
Stephanie Charles	Ilfracombe Art Trail
Leigh Crossman	Ariel Studios / The Ilfracombe Academy
Lewis Daniels	Ilfracombe Building Preservation Group
Paul Hopkinson	Annie and the Flint
Kelvin Farnell	Ilfracombe History Forum / Ilfracombe Museum
Nick Mollart	Ilfracombe Museum
Eliot Seabourn Wren	The Carlton / IBTA
Caz Turner	The Landmark
Ruth Warren	Ilfracombe Museum
Cllr. Sara Wilson	North Devon Council

WORKSHOPS

Workshops were utilised as a tool to develop local ownership of the cultural plan and to ensure that the contents was underpinned by the ideas and opinions of local people.

Workshop 1

Introduction to the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan: Vision and Cultural Framework

Date: 12th October 2023

Location: Online

Attendees: 19

Description: A 2 hour knowledge gathering and ‘icebreaking’ workshop that aimed to draw out language and descriptions to inspire the cultural vision. Included a range of creative exercises designed to support the development of the Cultural Framework skeleton, prior to population.

Workshop 2

Youth Voices

Date: 13th October 2023

Location: Landmark Theatre

Attendees: 12

Description: Informal discussion and conversations with Landmark Theatre youth group. Focus on how young people view the local area, what they like, what they dislike and what they would like to see more of.

Workshop 3

A deeper dive: Cultural Framework and Cultural Character Areas

Date: 14th November 2023

Location: The Landmark Theatre

Attendees: 24

Description: A 3 hour, in person workshop developed to delve deeper into the Cultural Framework, working with local stakeholders to identify potential projects and ideas. Introduction to the Cultural Character Areas and development of narratives for each of the designated areas via group exercises.

Workshop 4

Ilfracombe museum: What does the future look like?

Date: 15th November 2023

Location: Ilfracombe Town Council

Attendees: 12

Description: A 2 hour workshop to define future options available to Ilfracombe Museum in terms of relocation. Exercises included exploring best practice across the UK, understanding must-haves and compromises, identifying options available and ranking options in terms of desirability.

ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM SURVEY

Number of participants: 18

Description: A short survey comprising 8 questions, circulated online to local cultural and community stakeholders.

ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM

ILFRACOMBE MUSEUM RELOCATION STRATEGIC DEFINITION AND OUTLINE OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

Purpose of this Assessment

As part of the development of the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan, Things Made Public were asked to assess potential options for relocating Ilfracombe Museum, which faces a high risk of flooding in its current location according to the Environment Agency. The resulting assessment is intended to align with RIBA Stage 0 - Strategic Definition requirements including:

- Gathering insight from project stakeholders
- Outlining the strategic fit and vision for the project
- Identifying high-level spatial requirements
- Considering the pros and cons of a range of options with consideration for project risks

The resulting assessment is designed to be used by stakeholders including trustees of the Museum; North Devon Council, Ilfracombe Town Council and local supporters. The assessment should be seen as the basis for a brief for RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Studies; a supporting document for the business case for the project; and a tool to engage funders and supporters in providing resources for further design work to realise the project. This is outlined in a set of recommended next steps at the end of the assessment.

Context of the Ilfracombe Museum Relocation

Ilfracombe Museum is an independently-run museum founded in 1932 by curator Mervyn Palmer in the former laundry building of the Ilfracombe Hotel. The Museum holds a diverse collection that includes:

- The Palmer collection of world items including ceramics, textiles and other artefacts from South America and Africa

- Photo portraits of First World War service people from Ilfracombe
- Collections of Victorian costumes
- Taxidermy, butterflies and other natural history
- 'Holidays in Ilfracombe' memorabilia from throughout the 1900's to the 1980's
- Domestic tools, machines and collections including historic agricultural tools, a printing press, early computers and typewriters, kitchenware and medical artefacts
- Local history items including exhibits about Ilfracombe's early history, civil war period, early high street shops, war period and the story of tourism in the town
- Collections of maritime items

The display of these collections forms the basis of a local visitor attraction that draws in around 10,000 visitors per year, making it a valuable part of the town's tourism ecosystem as well as a resource for local people. The museum is overseen by a Charitable Incorporated Organisation governed by a board of trustees with a small paid staffing team supported by a group of local volunteers.

The museum is sited next to the Jubilee Gardens and Grosvenor Hotel car parks, at the back of the Landmark Theatre, however the position is not particularly prominent with little direct footfall. Capacity and maintenance issues had already been noted a number of years ago including roof leaks, rotting beams, damp caused by a watercourse running underneath the building, and a lack of space to store or exhibit collections. More seriously, the location of the museum in relation to the sea and below the level of Wilder Brook, one of the main rivers into the town, mean it is categorised as a Flood Zone 3 location by the Environment Agency, indicating the highest likelihood of imminent flooding. This could reach up to 10m according to the Environment Agency. With its current lease on the building due to expire in 2025, the need for a new location has become pressing, both to protect the museum's operations as a visitor attraction and the preservation of its collections.

CONSULTATION

In order to review Ilfracombe Museum relocation options, a number of consultation activities were undertaken to gain an understanding of key stakeholders needs and priorities. These have underpinned the Vision and Options Analysis conveyed in this document.

Consultation included:

1-2-1 Conversations

Nick Mollart - Chairman of Trustees, Ilfracombe Museum
Kelvin Farnell - Trustee, Ilfracombe Museum
Lindsay Armstrong - Manager, Ilfracombe Museum
Ruth Warren - Engagement Officer, Ilfracombe Museum

Ilfracombe Museum Workshop: What does the future look like?

Date: 15th November 2023

Location: Ilfracombe Town Council

Attendees: 12 (Including Museum trustees and staff, District Council and Town Council representatives)

Description: Exercises included exploring best practice across the UK, understanding must-haves and compromises, identifying options available and ranking options in terms of desirability.

Ilfracombe Museum Survey

Number of participants: 18

Description: A short survey comprising 8 questions, circulated online to local cultural and community stakeholders.

Survey Findings:

The majority of participants had visited the museum within the last year (**61.1%**) with **27.78%** of those having visited within the last month. This was accompanied by an above average score of **7.5/10** when asked to rate their experience at Ilfracombe Museum, indicating that the current offer is enjoyable for visitors.

Participants were torn in regards to how much admission to the Museum should be, with 'Donation Only' and '£5 and under' receiving identical responses (**38.9 % each**). Only **22.22%** of attendees thought the admission should be between £5 and £10.

It was important that the museum 'Celebrates Ilfracombe' with **83.3%** of participants ranking it as a 5 or 6 in terms of importance (6 being most important). 'Offers local history archives and research services' also proved very important to participants with **66.6%** ranking it as above 5 or 6 on the scale. 'Offering health and well-being initiatives' scored low on the scale with **66.66%** of participants scoring it as 2 and under in importance (1 being the lowest). Ensuring that Ilfracombe Museum 'is an inclusive space' (**41.18%**) and 'offers community learning and education space' (**47.05%**) were also of high importance to survey participants.

88.89% of participants think that Ilfracombe Museum is an important asset to be saved. As such, **61.11 %** of participants indicated that they thought a seafront location for the Museum would best benefit Ilfracombe. The **27.78%** who voted for 'other' generally consented that either location could work.

"I think location is irrelevant as provided it is offering the right amount of interest or activities then this will draw people to it."

VISION

Vision: An Introduction

The outcomes of the survey, workshops and wider engagement activities conducted as part of the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan have formed the basis for a shared vision for Ilfracombe Museum. This vision aligns the project with the strategic priorities of the wider cultural plan for the town, the mission of the Ilfracombe Museum Trust and broader regional and national objectives for heritage and culture. Any proposals for the relocated Ilfracombe Museum must be able to satisfy this vision.

Vision: A Community Museum For Ilfracombe

Ilfracombe Museum is reflective of the community, local traditions and omnipresent landscape; alive with intrigue and curiosities that are daring to be discovered. It holds in trust, displays, conserves and collects historical objects and records relating to the social history of the town.

Its arms are open wide to the public, offering accessible and inclusive activities that foster diversity and sustainability, creating a space that not only operates professionally and ethically but also offers varied experiences for education and research, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing. The museum works hard to remove barriers to participation, creating an equitable space, where all are welcome.

It is a place that feels like home to all that pass through, where visitors can understand and appreciate the history and heritage of Ilfracombe whilst also actively contributing to the protection of the collection and celebration of the local area via interactive experiences, activities and projects.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Benefits of a Community-led Approach to Ilfracombe Museum

Placing the community at the heart of Ilfracombe Museum will:

- Mitigate seasonal challenges by encouraging footfall to the Museum all year round.
- Attract external funding and sponsorship for community engagement and education programmes.
- Attract and broaden the volunteering pool, increasing the Museum's operational capacity.
- Encourage a greater spectrum of partnership opportunities with local education, community and cultural organisations.

The Benefits of a Community-led Approach to Wider Ilfracombe

Placing the community at the heart of Ilfracombe Museum will:

- Act as a catalyst to drive further footfall to key locations around the town, creating a distinctive experience that celebrates Ilfracombe for all who visit.
- Support actively shaping the identity of Ilfracombe, showcasing the stories and heritage of the town to residents and visitors alike.
- Contribute to the increased well-being of the local community by providing activities that also help to tackle issues such as social isolation, loneliness, unemployment etc.

SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS

Regardless of the site that is chosen for relocation, it will need to meet the spatial needs of the museum ensuring that it can house and protect the collections, continue to operate as a visitor attraction and deliver against the vision for a Community Museum for Ilfracombe.

Current Provision

The current site of Ilfracombe Museum affords 282 sqm of floor space, used to house and display a collection of around 28,000 items. This is notably constrained compared with comparable museums as outlined in the table below:

Museum	Public collections		Public non-collections		Non-public collections		Non-public non-collections		Total Sqm	Collections/Space ratio	Public Space/Visitor Ratio
	Sqm	% of total	Sqm	% of total	Sqm	% of total	Sqm	% of total			
Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	572	41%	235	17%	341	24%	254	18%	1402	12.17	13.5
Torquay Museum	963	52%	336	18%	407	22%	130	7%	1835	4.57	54.1
Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter	2047	38%	501	9%	2000	37%	858	16%	5406	4.05	10.2
Tiverton Museum of Mid-Devon Life	1140	65%	222	13%	228	13%	160	9%	1750	105.23	26.2
North Hertfordshire Museum	634	42%	566	38%	158	10%	148	10%	1506	9.90	23.1
Ilfracombe Museum (current)	190	67%	39	14%	39	14%	14	5%	282	8.19	22.9

This leads to a number of restrictions including:

- Public displays crowded with items due to the lack of non-public collections space
- Minimal non-collection public space meaning shop, café, community activity or other revenue generating space is not possible
- Lack of basic public amenities impacting on the public experience
- An absence of staff or office facilities limiting organisational operations

In light of this, a minimum requirement for a new facility should not assume a like-for-like replacement. Any proposed solution will need to provide the space for Ilfracombe Museum to operate sustainably and deliver a quality programme whilst delivering additionality and value for money.

Opportunities to Enhance the Offer

The relocation of Ilfracombe Museum affords an opportunity to expand the impact and ambition of the offer, in line with the proposed vision and strategic alignment of a Community Museum for Ilfracombe. This may include:

- Additional public collections space to provide higher quality curated exhibitions and a more coherent visitor experience to grow visitor numbers
- Additional non-collections space to drive forward a stronger programme of public engagement, community activity and temporary exhibitions
- Public non-collection space to support revenue generating services such as F&B, retail and hireable space to support the financial resilience and sustainability of the museum
- Non-public collections space to provide greater opportunities for research activities and higher quality preservation of collections
- Office and other staff amenity to support a growing operational team

In line with this, we have developed a range of scenarios of differing scales, outlining within each an appropriate allocation of floorspace needed for public collections, additional public areas, non-public collections space and other non-public/operational space.

These floorspace estimates are based on a number of factors which we have baselined against regional and national examples. They include:

- **Collections space to collections size ratio** – Expressed in terms of sqm provided for public and non-public collections space per 1,000 collection items. This reflects the capacity of a museum to provide a changing curatorial experience, care for collections and potential to grow collections.
- **Public space to visitor numbers ratio** – Expressed as sqm of publicly accessible space per 1,000 annual visitors. This is an indicator of a museum's ability to grow audiences as well as provide a range of public experiences and amenities.
- **Public Collections / Public Non-Collections / Non-Public Collections / Non-Public Non-Collections Space** – Expressed as a percentage of floorspace given over to each use. A typical standard is 40/20/20/20 balance, although alterations to this can reflect the differing focus and business models of museums as well as allowances for flexible space.

Operational and Business Model Implications

Achieving the benefits of an expansion is not solely dependent on additional space. Increased spatial capacity requires a correlated increase in operational capacity, from curatorial and engagement staff to operational overheads and revenue generation. Differing scales of facility may require new business models to balance these considerations.

In light of this, against each scenario we have provided an outline of key operational considerations that would be required to ensure the organisational capacity is in place to deliver the primary benefits of each scenario, ranging from staff requirements, to fundraising capacity and business planning.

A Note on Outline Capital Costs

Capital costs have been provided as an indicative guide only against each scale of facility. These should not be considered as proposed budgets for capital projects, which should be developed through detailed RIBA 1 feasibility studies on confirmed site options. Instead, the figures provided are intended for the purposes of site identification. These are based on industry standard £5,120/sqm construction cost estimates for museum uses and £2,150/sqm for interpretive fitout of an existing facility, adjusted for Tender Price Index, Project Value Adjustments and Regional Variation. A range has then been presented to reflect the wide variance in efficiencies and additional costs that could be required to deliver the project depending on the proposed site including:

- New build vs existing premises
- Site condition, limitations (such as listed building status) and level of works required to bring to museum standard
- Stand-alone scheme or inclusion within a wider development or mixed operator model
- Site acquisition requirements
- Variation between 'lift and shift' from existing site and a completely new design

MINIMUM VIABLE OPTION

Summary

The minimum viable provision provides an indication of the lowest spatial capacity needed in order to deliver the museum in its current format and operational model.

Spatial Needs

445 sqm space with sufficient flexibility to support:
280 sqm of exhibition space
65 sqm of additional public space including toilet facilities
60 sqm collections storage and handling
40 sqm staff space including deskspace and storage

Indicative Costs

£1 million to £3 million

Benefits

- Some increased capacity of collections space would allow for collections to be displayed in a more coherent fashion.
- Would ensure the retention of the collection whilst allowing public access and for it to continue to function as a visitor attraction.
- Higher potential as a lower cost temporary option.

Drawbacks

- Little flexibility for changing programmes meaning it would be unlikely to increase visitor numbers.
- Insufficient space to deliver a substantial public engagement programme in line with the community-focused vision.
- The lack of significant additionality would make capital funding difficult to justify.

Operational and Cost Considerations

Would require minimal or no changes to operational structure or business model.
No additional operational costs as long as lease, business rates and overheads remain in line with current costs.

SMALL PREMISES

Summary

An indicative 600 sqm proposition has been devised to offer a scale which would allow the museum to develop a stronger community offer whilst requiring minimum adjustments to the existing business model or structure.

Spatial Needs

600 sqm space with sufficient flexibility to support:
330 sqm of permanent and temporary exhibition space
110 sqm of public space including flexible community/workshop space
110 sqm of collections storage
50 sqm staff space including small staff office and storage space

Indicative Costs

£1.2 million to £3.5 million

Benefits

- More collections space would allow for some flexibility in displays and a low level of rotation of exhibits supporting a minor uplift in visitor numbers.
- Space for public engagement workshops and/or temporary exhibitions to allow more public involvement in the museum.
- Ability to provide a small dedicated staff area although with minimal storage or meeting space.

Drawbacks

- Variation in exhibits would remain low and would likely only have a minor impact on visitor numbers.
- Premises would offer little in the way of revenue generating services such as hireable space, F&B or significant shop floor space meaning the business model would continue to rely on low overheads and admissions revenue.

Operational and Cost Considerations

- Would require minimal or no changes to operational or staffing structure although might benefit from additional fundraising capacity to raise funds for engagement activity.
- Delivery of engagement projects would create a minor additional revenue cost to be covered by increased visitor spend or small grant applications.

MEDIUM PREMISES

Summary

A 850 sqm proposition has been devised as an option that could allow a significant transformation of the museum into a more community-facing operation whilst also providing opportunities for greater long-term sustainability.

Spatial Needs

850 sqm space with sufficient flexibility to support:

420 sqm of permanent and temporary exhibition space

200 sqm of public space including flexible community/workshop space and a shop or café

150 sqm of collections storage including space for research and collections handling

80 sqm staff space including office with small meeting room capacity

Indicative Costs

£1.8 million to £4.5 million

Benefits

- Combined exhibition and collections storage would allow for a significantly more dynamic curatorial approach with a likely impact on visitor numbers.
- Substantial uplift in community space would support a far greater level of community ownership and involvement enhancing the social impact of the museum.
- Opportunities for additional revenue streams through shop/café and event hires as well as potential for fundraising derived from increased community and education activity.
- Office and meeting space would help grow organisational capacity and team.

Drawbacks

- Additional capital costs would need to be justified by improvements to visitor and engagement numbers.
- Benefits of additional space would be dependent on curatorial quality and storytelling.

Operational and Cost Considerations

- Would likely require adaptations to the current business model with additional curatorial and/or engagement staff as well as greater capacity for fundraising.
- More ambitious programme of exhibitions and engagement would need a consequent increase in turnover, likely through higher visitor numbers, additional spend within the museum and fundraising.

LARGE PREMISES

Summary

As part of the proposal of a new Ilfracombe Museum development, the museum's staff and trustees have worked with architects to develop spatial needs and outline proposals for a 1,750 sqm museum that would offer a scale in line with attractions such as Torquay Museum.

Spatial Needs

Evolving designs developed by architects, trustees and museum staff have outlined the following spatial requirements. These spatial estimates are based on evolving design assumptions for a specific site and therefore one would anticipate variation within these based on different proposed site locations, whether in a new build or redevelopment of an existing site.

1750 sqm space including:

430 sqm - Permanent Museum Exhibition Space

100 sqm - Flexible Exhibition/Community Space

150 sqm - Collections Storage

16 sqm - Archive and Research Facilities

20 sqm - Staff Room and Welfare Facilities

210 sqm - Shop / Lobby Area

224 sqm - Dining Area

48 sqm - Kitchen

16 sqm - Kitchen Store

64 sqm - Children's Play Area

150 sqm - Cafe Break-out and Circulation Area

24 sqm - Kitchenette and Served

50 sqm - Meeting Room

200 sqm - Education Room with Toilets and Cloakroom

40 sqm - Male, Female and Accessible Toilets

12 sqm - Changing Facilities

60 sqm - Additional Circulation

Indicative Costs

£3.5 million to £10 million

Benefits

Would offer a transformational scale proposition that could act as a centre of community and culture for the town.

Level of ambition could have benefits for perceptions of the town and the tourism sector.

Under a suitable business model it could offer a mixed-revenue stream for the facility.

Drawbacks

- Funders for this option would need to see a detailed business case indicating how such an offer would deliver economic and social benefits to the town; additional visitor and engagement numbers; viable business plan; and a commercial strategy to deliver the scheme with value for money.
- Fewer existing site options exist of this typology making a new build the more likely requirement. The level of risk within this is significant. If the proposition is unsuccessful then finding alternative uses for the site would be challenging.

Operational and Cost Considerations

- Growing the museum to this scale, effectively a 6-fold increase on the scale of the existing site, would require a fundamental change to the operational business model of the existing museum and trust.
- Commercial viability would require a more complex balance of revenue generation to meet a greater variety of ongoing costs. This would likely need to include growing relationships with key funders to support core and project costs whilst also having the expertise to maximise the commercial elements of the business.
- This shouldn't be embarked upon without a detailed business plan offering a strong creative vision and viable operational and financial business model for the delivery of a sustainable and impactful attraction and cultural hub for Ilfracombe.

SUMMARY OF SPATIAL OPTIONS

The range of spatial options presented highlight how the selection of an appropriate site needs to take into account the cost and operational implications of differing scales of facility. Overall, our assessment suggests that a 600 to 850 sqm offers the strongest balance between viability under the existing business model whilst delivering the benefits of the vision for a Community Museum for Ilfracombe.

A larger scale proposition could offer significant additional benefits, however this requires a new business plan that can highlight how such an offer would be managed, generate revenue and be sustainable.

Spatial Option	Public collections		Public non-collections		Non-public collections		Non-public non-collections		Total Sqm	Cost Range
	Sqm	% of total	Sqm	% of total	Sqm	% of total	Sqm	% of total		
Current Museum	190	68%	39	14%	39	14%	14	5%	282	N/A
Minimum Requirement	280	64%	65	15%	60	13%	40	8%	445	£1m - £3m
Small Premises	330	54%	110	19%	110	19%	50	9%	600	£1.2m - £3.5m
Medium Premises	420	49%	200	23%	150	19%	80	9%	850	£1.8m - £4.5m
Large Premises	546	31%	900	52%	153	9%	150	9%	1749	£4m - £10m

POTENTIAL SITE OPTIONS

As part of the ongoing process to identify a suitable site for the relocation of Ilfracombe Museum in the near future due to increased flooding risk, a variety of potential options are under consideration. These include:

- Museum New Build (Seafront)
- Refurbished Heritage Asset (Seafront)
- Repurposed Property (High Street)

MUSEUM NEW BUILD (SEAFRONT)

A bespoke, sustainable, new build development that can support a number of income generation opportunities such as a cafe, soft play area and meeting rooms alongside ample floor space to display and store the museum's extensive collection.

Opportunities

- Unlike retrofitting an existing building, a new development ensures a truly bespoke purpose-built design that can accommodate all needs and requirements for the museum, particularly regarding accessibility and collection preservation.
- A new-build presents the opportunity to deliver a flagship space unique to Ilfracombe with potential to attract new visitors to Ilfracombe
- The development can be integrated into a larger urban transformation scheme for the town, creating impact beyond the building.
- Designing from scratch can ensure that co-design and community involvement are embedded in every aspect of the build process as well as delivering multi-purpose spaces which could then be used by a much wider proportion of the local community.
- A new build would likely offer lower operational overheads once complete including potential for energy generation.

Challenges

- A building of this scale will require a robust funding strategy which at this stage has not been identified.
- A development of this scale will be accompanied by a lengthy build period. Alternative arrangements for the display and/or storage of the collection will need to be identified.
- Planning for the building will require in-depth scrutiny. There is no guarantee that planning permission will be granted.
- New builds typically have a higher carbon footprint due to the use of new materials and energy.
- Due to the elongated timeframe and scale, new build projects can cause severe disruption to local communities and businesses in the local area.

REFURBISHED HERITAGE ASSET (SEAFRONT)

The refurbishment of an existing heritage building that provides suitable space for the museum collection and champions collaboration with local cultural and community organisations via space sharing and partnership working.

Opportunities

- Refurbishing and breathing new life into an existing heritage building demonstrates a deep commitment to both the architecture and heritage of Ilfracombe.
- There are a wider range of funding opportunities available for heritage-based \ build projects that celebrate existing spaces and buildings.
- There is an opportunity to improve energy efficiency in a building previously deemed as inefficient, resulting in an environmental gain.
- This approach could lead to the delivery of an incredibly special and distinctive space that truly champions the character of Ilfracombe.

Challenges

- An appropriate building needs to be identified and acquired which can be a lengthy process.
- There are additional planning and cost implications to take into account when undertaking building works on listed buildings.
- Even though energy efficiency can be improved, running costs will most likely be higher in a refurbished heritage building.
- Working to an existing footprint can prove challenging when trying to create a truly accessible space that has a distinct use in mind.

REPURPOSED PROPERTY (HIGH STREET)

Repurposing a high street property provides an opportunity to accrue more floor space for the museum collection in a prime location whilst also offering a viable route for North Devon Council to grow the town's residential stock on the upper floors.

Opportunities

- Energy efficiency can be improved in a building that is most likely currently deemed as inefficient, resulting in an environmental gain as opposed to a loss.
- Relocation to the high street will serve to drive footfall to that area of the town.
- The high street is frequented every day by local people and visitors, thus providing a fantastic opportunity for outreach activities and audience development.
- It provides the most affordable option in terms of build costs.
- Opportunities for income generation through the offer of residential stock on the upper floors.
- It will be seen as the catalyst for regeneration of the high street and is likely to garner political support.

Challenges

- Current perceptions of the high street are not favourable, thus the museum will have to work hard to change this.
- Access to buildings on the high street can prove difficult and could cause issues such as parking, deliveries etc.
- Working to an existing footprint can prove challenging when trying to create a truly accessible space that has a distinct use in mind.
- Some buildings on the high street are listed. If a listed building was to be utilised for this project, additional planning and cost implications should be taken into account.

SITE OPTIONS ANALYSIS

	Do Nothing Scenario	Museum New Build (Seafront)	Refurbished Heritage Asset (Seafront)	Repurposed Property (High Street)
Cost	Short-term repair or mitigation costs on existing site would be prohibitive and likely lead to future costs of temporary storage for the collection.	The costs associated with developing a new build asset are higher than retrofitting an existing building.	Whilst more cost effective than a new build, costs could rise if the building identified is listed or in need of extensive works.	Whilst most likely to be the most cost effective option, costs could rise if the building is listed or in need of extensive works.
Timeframe	Remaining within the current site would simply condense the timeframe available at a later date to fund a solution.	A new build development and all it entails e.g design, planning, build, fit-out etc is a time consuming process.	Retrofitting a building offers a shorter solution in terms of timeframe however, it can still be a relatively long process, if the building is listed or in a poor state.	Retrofitting a building offers a shorter solution in terms of timeframe however, it can still be a relatively long process, if the building is listed or in a poor state.
Fundability	Uncertainty of the site location would present too high a risk for potential funders to pay for temporary mitigations or ongoing operations.	There are limited funding avenues to explore and elevated competition when raising funds for a new build development.	There are additional funding routes available for a scheme that will reinvigorate a heritage building.	There are more funding routes available for a retrofit build that benefits the wider community and brings an existing building back to life.
Community Ownership	Would retain current levels of community involvement.	A new build development enables the community to be involved in every aspect of the design process from the very outset.	Whilst retrofitting buildings have constraints, there is still opportunity to involve community in design and programming phases.	Whilst retrofitting buildings have constraints, there is still opportunity to involve community in design and programming phases.
Collection Preservation	Would put the preservation of the current collection at considerable risk.	A new build development can be designed to offer the optimum environment to preserve a collection.	This option can offer a sound environment for collection preservation, however this could be compromised by the retrofit nature of the build.	This option can offer a sound environment for collection preservation, however this could be compromised by the retrofit nature of the build.
Income source identified?	Existing income would be retained whilst the museum remains in operation.	Income sources such as a soft play area and cafe have been identified. Alongside retaining admission fee to the museum.	Sharing the building with other cultural providers means shared maintenance costs thus decreasing the need for additional income sources.	Upper floors can be used to grow council owned housing stock, in turn generating income.
Accessibility	Existing site has poor accessibility.	A new build development can be designed to be a truly accessible space for all that visit.	Whilst retrofitted buildings can be designed to meet accessibility standards, sometimes this can be compromised by the existing footprint.	Whilst retrofitted buildings can be designed to meet accessibility standards, sometimes this can be compromised by the existing footprint.
Town-wide Impact	The further deterioration of the site and potential loss of the museum collection would have considerable negative impact on the town.	A new-build in a prominent location would potentially garner valuable publicity for the town and boost its tourism profile.	Repurposing a heritage asset would generate community pride and set a precedent for adapting heritage buildings that could catalyse further improvements to heritage sites across the town.	Would bring a valuable anchor attraction to the high street, boosting surrounding businesses, increasing community pride in the high street and potentially attracting further investment.

CONCLUSIONS

This previous outline assessment highlights how each of the available options are significantly preferable to the 'do nothing' scenario. Each one presents its own relative benefits and risks, however in the absence of concrete proposed site locations and associated costs, a definitive preferred option cannot be established at this stage and would need to be achieved as part of a RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility. In order to achieve this we would recommend the following steps towards identifying and selecting a viable option for the Museum:

(1) Select a Shortlist of Locations

- **Clarify Planning Conditions for a New Build on Victoria Pavilion Site** - Currently the former Victoria Pavilion site is seen as the most likely new build location. Planning restrictions have previously been raised regarding this site. Confirmation as to whether the proposition of a new museum on the site is potentially viable would need to happen before proceeding.
- **Select a suitable high street property** - A definitive list of sites that would meet the spatial requirements of the museum needs to be identified allowing landlords to be contacted about potential lease or purchase options on the sites in order to select a viable option.
- **Confirm potential of Emmanuel Church** - Emmanuel Church has been proposed as a potential location for the museum. The owners need to be approached to understand their intentions for the site and willingness to undertake a restoration project. Current occupiers The SPACE would also need to be approached to outline the potential of a shared facility.
- **Select a preferred option to take to RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility** - Once a shortlist of sites has been identified and an indication of approximate scale of costs, risks and ability to meet the needs of the museum are better understood, use a scoring approach to the above options assessment in order to agree a preferred option to take forward to RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility.

(2) Consult with Local Residents and Visitors

- **Circulate Ilfracombe Museum survey** - Distribute the survey used as part of this options assessment exercise to a wider cross section of residents and visitors.
- **Collect insights to evidence priorities and support** - Collect and collate this data to gain a deeper understanding of local priorities and support for the museum that can inform design work and enhance funding applications to resource design works.

(3) Develop the Museum's Business Plan and Resilience

- **Create an outline business plan to support site selection process** - An outline business plan should include the items listed in the 'Relocation: Business Planning Requirements' section outlined below. This will be crucial for both selecting an appropriate site and attracting resources to conduct further design work.
- **Develop a meanwhile option for the museum** - There is a need for stakeholders, museum trustees and staff to work together on a temporary plan to secure a base for Ilfracombe Museum whilst relocation is in process. This should include ensuring the collections are protected and that the public can continue to engage with them.
- **Develop full business plan** - Once RIBA Stage 1 designs have been completed, these should form the basis of a full business plan for the museum, based on the agreed relocation site. This should include details of financial modelling and cash flow for development and operation of the site to ensure financial sustainability and confirm funding needs. A clear strategic case showing benefit to the community and the wider objectives for culture in Ilfracombe can form the basis for funding applications to wider supporters.

(4) Commission and conduct RIBA Stage 1 Preparation and Brief

- **Commission RIBA Stage 1** - A suitable advisor or consultancy team should be commissioned, if in-house expertise is not available, to conduct the RIBA Stage 1 Preparation of a Design Brief for the project. This should include requirements to provide a feasibility study for the chosen site, refine the project outcomes and spatial requirements, define the project budget and prepare the project brief for further design works.
- **Conduct feasibility study** - As part of the RIBA Stage 1 process, a feasibility study should be undertaken to ensure that the proposed site is able to meet the spatial needs of the Museum; that the cost implications are realistic; and that the proposed site can meet the wider project objectives of the museum. This may require the development of initial architectural drawings to assess the options for the site, particularly if there are limitations that need to be accounted for.
- **Create design brief** - If the proposal is deemed viable then the project should proceed to the development of the design brief for the project, setting out desired project outcomes, spatial requirements, project budget, exemplar or reference projects and details of further studies that will need to be undertaken in later design phases.

BUSINESS PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Relocation: Business Planning Requirements

The Trustees of Ilfracombe Museum are required to produce a detailed business plan to aid the relocation of the museum. This should include the following:

Executive Summary

- Brief overview of the Ilfracombe Museum business concept, mission, and goals.
- Highlights of key financial projections and achievements.

Business Strategy

Space Development:

- Purpose: Establish clear spatial requirements.
- Financial Considerations: Estimate costs associated with space development.
- Funding Strategy: Determine the financial mechanisms, be it grants, loans, or investor engagement.

Demand and Marketing:

- Anticipated Interest: Project anticipated interest in Ilfracombe Museum.
- Promotional Strategy: Formulate a marketing strategy for exhibitions, events, and programmes.

Constraints

- Identify key spatial and financial constraints.
- Provide clear mitigation strategies for identified constraints.

Risks

Operational Risks:

- Risk Identification: Identify potential risks within day-to-day operations, encompassing staffing and volunteer management.
- Contingency Measures: Develop contingency plans and training initiatives to mitigate operational risks.

Financial Risks:

- Risk Assessment: Assess financial risks pertaining to funding fluctuations, economic downturns, and unforeseen expenses.
- Risk Mitigation: Establish financial reserves and explore diversified income streams for risk mitigation.

Financial Forecasts

Overheads:

- Expenditure Breakdown: Provide a detailed breakdown of overheads, including staffing, volunteer expenses, building costs, IT, admin, collections care and display.
- Staffing Rationale: Articulate the rationale behind staffing numbers and safety considerations.
- Volunteer Recruitment Strategy: Detail strategies for the recruitment of volunteers.

Income Streams:

- Revenue Projections: Present realistic income projections for admissions, shop sales, research income, and existing revenue streams.
- Long-Term Projections: Project income over multiple years, considering seasonal variations.

Additional Income Streams:

- Diversification Strategies: Introduce new income streams such as a cafe, room rentals, and educational visits.
- Budgetary Considerations: Budget associated costs for each new income stream.

Sensitivity Analysis:

- Impact Assessment: Conduct a sensitivity analysis to evaluate the impact of varying visitor numbers on revenue streams.
- Variable Identification: Identify key variables affecting financial outcomes.

Core Activities and Programming

- Strategic Focus: Define core activities, including exhibitions, events, and educational programmes.
- Programming Expansion: Project additional programming to validate funding projections.

**THINGS MADE
PUBLIC**