



North Devon Surfing Beaches Coastal Community Team

Economic Plan

March 2017

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to present a vision and economic plan for the ‘North Devon Surfing Beaches’ as significant environmental, economic and community assets for both the local and wider area. It has been prepared by the North Devon Surfing Beaches Coastal Community Team (CCT), which for the first time has brought together the range of interests across all of the beaches to prepare a joined-up strategy that responds to both individual and collective issues and opportunities.

2. Context

2.1. *The local area*

The ‘North Devon Surfing Beaches’ comprise the four main beaches on the North Devon coast – Woolacombe, Saunton Sands, Putsborough and Croyde (see Fig. 2.1) - all are within the North Devon local authority area. Each is a wide, largely unspoilt sandy beach, backed by sand dunes with dramatic seascapes and are wild places from which to view and experience the North Devon coast.

The beaches are located within a very high quality landscape and natural environment. They all fall within the North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which is centred upon the internationally important Braunton Burrows sand dune system behind Saunton Sands (see Fig. 2.2). They are also protected for their undeveloped character as part of the Heritage Coast. These environmental designations bring national profile, but also constraints in terms of the ability to bring forward new developments.

This stretch of coast has been popular as a tourism destination since Victorian times, attracting visitors from across the country and abroad, as well as residents from across the county. In the summer months, local communities are transformed by the numbers of staying and day visitors. Barnstaple, the sub-regional centre for the wider area (pop. 24,000) is just 8 miles away from the nearest beach, and the coastal resort town of Ilfracombe (pop. 11,500), 5 miles away. But these are also beaches of international renown – in 2015 (and again in 2016), Woolacombe was voted the best beach in the UK, the fourth best beach in Europe, and the 13th best in the world on TripAdvisor.



Figure 2.1

All of the beaches are privately owned and road access is typically along narrow roads, which can become very congested in the summer. Public transport is limited, with a rail connection from Exeter terminating at Barnstaple and bus routes, where available, located some distance from beach access points. However, all of the beaches are along the route of the South West Coast Path and the Tarka Trail, which provides off road cycle access from Barnstaple as far as Braunton.

All four beaches are westward facing, benefiting from uninterrupted wave swells from the north Atlantic and producing some of the best surfing conditions in the UK, regularly attracting world class surfers. Consequently, an important surf economy has developed around the beaches which has greatly benefited the wider tourism sector. As surfing is a year-round activity, attracting high value visitors who visit again and again, and out of season, this has become a strategically important market to develop, although North Devon has a long way to go to match the more mature surf economy in nearby Cornwall.

Whilst the surfing conditions in North Devon can be described as ‘world class’, unfortunately many of the facilities for surfers locally cannot, with issues, such as inadequate facilities (e.g. toilets, changing rooms, facilities for visitors with disabilities), on some of the beaches. If the North Devon Surfing Beaches are to compete in a global market, they all need to provide facilities comparable to the best in the country, and the key stakeholders need to work together to make a significant impact.

There are also issues around access and participation locally. As an area, North Devon needs to inspire its residents, particularly young people, to overcome the barriers of peripherality and disadvantage. Some local children in Barnstaple have never seen the sea and cannot afford to access the beaches, although there is important work being done by local schools, colleges, Surf Life Saving Clubs, the

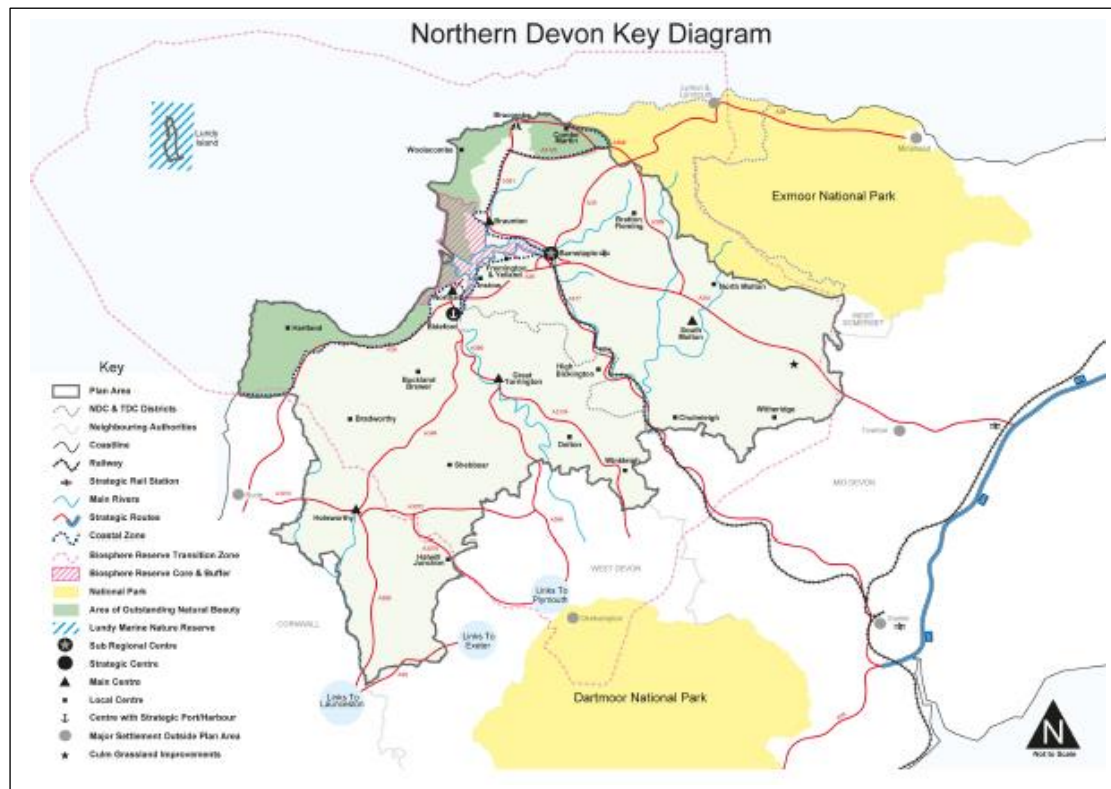


Figure 2.2 North Devon environmental designations

RNLI and Oceanfest to address such exclusion. The Surfing Beaches are invaluable local assets with potential to impact positively upon health, wellbeing, personal confidence and aspirations. As an area, we need to do more to ensure that these benefits are available to all, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups.

These are the challenges that we as a Coastal Community Team seek to address within this Plan as a basis to strengthen and grow the economy and increase the quality of life for our communities' residents.

2.2. Community context

The North Devon Surfing Beaches are all within a very rural area. Communities closest to the Surfing Beaches include Woolacombe, Morteohoe, Georgeham, Croyde and Braunton (see Fig. 2.1). Braunton (pop. c. 8,100 including Wrafton) and Woolacombe (pop. c. 1,000) are the larger villages, providing a range of local services and community facilities. Typical community characteristics and issues described within the 'Braunton and Wrafton Area Study'¹, included:

- Low levels of deprivation
- Low reliance on benefits
- Low levels of unemployment
- A very high dependency on tourism with high proportions of jobs in retailing, hotels and restaurants
- Below average crime rates
- Above average house prices and limited potential housing supply
- Residents are generally in good health, similar to the district average
- Schools appear to be at or near capacity
- A good range of community facilities
- Transport – good links to the Tarka Trail, the National Cycle Network and the South West Coast Path

Whilst the resident population of the villages is quite modest, numbers swell many times over during the summer months as the beaches are popular attractions for staying and day visitors. The beaches are very much resources for the wider northern Devon area, including significant town populations within Barnstaple (pop. 24,000), Ilfracombe (pop. 11,500) and Bideford (16,610), which each have pockets of high deprivation. Community challenges facing the wider northern Devon area² include:

- Low skills, low wages and low productivity
- A shortage of affordable housing, and the impact of second/holiday home ownership
- High fuel, energy and food prices, particularly in rural communities
- Inspiring young people
- Improving health and quality of life, particularly in disadvantaged communities
- Addressing the needs of an ageing population and social exclusion with poor public transport in a rural area

Our Plan is focused, not just on benefiting the communities that are closest to the beaches, but also the wider area, particularly disadvantaged groups and communities to be able to access and participate in surfing for the range of benefits it provides.

¹ North Devon Council (2011) *Braunton and Wrafton Area Study Report: Core Strategy Evidence*, October 2011, prepared to support community consultation to inform the Joint North Devon and Torrridge Core Strategy

² Northern Devon Partnership (2009) *Northern Devon Joint Sustainable Community Strategy*

2.3. The local economy

The broad district-wide economic context is a very peripheral rural area, with few large employers and a business base of predominantly very small businesses. Self-employment is relatively high, and incomes and skills are both low, reflecting a high dependence on traditional sectors, such as farming and tourism; although the economy as a whole is quite mixed with significant activity within manufacturing, health and social care, business services, food and drink, and marine industries. Barnstaple, the Sub-Regional Centre for the wider northern Devon area is a key focus for development and employment.

The Surfing Beaches fall within the Barnstaple Travel to Work Area. In 2001, around one third of working residents in the Braunton area (34%) travelled to Barnstaple for employment³. Whilst Braunton, the largest village, is home to a number of significant manufacturing businesses, the Surfing Beaches economy is dominated by tourism, ranging from major hotels to holiday parks, B&Bs, food & drink and marine leisure businesses. The large number of second homes along the coastal zone adds to the supply of holiday accommodation locally. The villages closest to the Surfing Beaches (Croyde, Georgeham, Morteohoe and Woolacombe) all fall within the North Devon Coast AONB protected landscape designation and offer very limited future economic development opportunities.

In the late 60s/early 70s, Braunton was a hub for UK surfing and the national surfing economy, a focus which has continued to the present day. The town was a centre for handcrafted board building, exporting to other areas, and although the industry has changed, people from the area are still very much involved in the design of boards and the surfing economy. Examples of local businesses include Saltrock and Kangaroo Poo, who tapped into the fashion for the urban surfing market in the 1980s.

In 2014, a total of 126 marine leisure businesses were identified within northern Devon⁴ (across North Devon and Torridge district areas), with significant clusters around Braunton, Croyde and Woolacombe and Saunton. Today, local surfing-related businesses include equipment manufacturers, retailers, equipment hire, activity providers and arts/media businesses, and In June each year, Oceanfest draws in thousands of visitors to Croyde beach for a surf and music festival.

The wider range of tourism-related sectors also benefit greatly from surfing visitors, including accommodation, attractions, food & drink, retail and transport. In 2015, across North Devon district as a whole, tourism was worth an estimated £406.5m to the local economy and supported 17% of all employment in the district. In 2008, the value of surfing to the northern Devon economy (including accommodation, food and drink etc.) was estimated to be worth £52.1m and supported 1,470 jobs⁵. This research also showed that surf tourists are high value visitors who return again and again, often out of season when the surf conditions are best. Strategically, therefore, it is a key visitor market to develop.

³ Census, 2001

⁴ North Devon + (2014) *The marine leisure sector in Northern Devon: NEA2 strategy context*

⁵ Trisurf (2008), *The economic value of surfing in North Devon*

2.4. *Related initiatives*

Other local projects and initiatives that are relevant to this Plan include:

- **Ilfracombe Watersports Centre** – A new purpose-built centre for watersports is planned on Ilfracombe Harbour (see Fig. 2.3). Subject to funding, this new year-round visitor attraction will provide facilities for visitors/residents to allow safe access to the water, to try out new watersports, hire equipment, receive tuition from qualified instructors, and train for sports qualifications, in activities ranging from kayaking, sailing and gig racing to sub-aqua diving and stand-up paddle-boarding. The Centre will provide accommodation for watersports clubs and private operators, as well as outreach support to marine leisure and tourism-related businesses in the area to help grow the value of the watersports economy in northern Devon. This will be a key project to link and work with, as surfing is a key element of the northern Devon watersports proposition.
- **New Barnstaple Leisure Centre Project** – this is a key development for surfing activity in North Devon. The current centre provides vital training facilities for surfing and surf lifesaving, particularly during the winter months, and enables participation across communities within the wider area. Designs for a new Leisure Centre in Barnstaple are currently being consulted upon prior to a planning application being made, including discussions with Surf Clubs and Surf Life Saving Clubs. Subject to funding, there is potential to include flexible new facilities within the centre for the Clubs, including deep water pools for training. Although outside of the Surfing Beaches area, this project is closely linked and is strongly supported by the CCT.
- **RNLI ‘Respect the Water’ project** – ‘Respect the Water’ is the RNLI’s drowning prevention campaign, which highlights the risks involved in relation to water and water-based activities and how those risks can be avoided or reduced. The RNLI is a key partner within the CCT, particularly in relation to beach and watersports safety. This is an important initiative to link with in encouraging participation in surf-related beach activities.
- **Surf Life Saving GB Graduate Lifeguard Programme** – an established programme for young lifesavers (ages 13-16), partnering with local schools and organisations that have contact with young people
- **North Devon Coast AONB ‘Coastal Creatures’ programme** – provides citizen science opportunities to identify, record, enjoy and learn about the varied flora and fauna of diverse intertidal and coastal habitats within the AONB, including Croyde Bay. The programme includes beach cleans to reduce negative impacts on coastal wildlife and habitats; and learning and interpretation materials to encourage wildlife recording, engagement and protection amongst visitors and residents.
- **The Wave Project** – This is a charity helping young people to reduce anxiety and improve confidence through surfing. The project provides surf courses and one-to-one lessons for young people to help them improve their mental health, reduce anxiety and social isolation. Locally, the Wave Project operates at Croyde, working with young people from across North Devon, and is a member of the Coastal Community Team.

- **The Tarka Trail and Tarka Trail Coastal Community Team** – The Tarka Trail is a 180 mile cycleway/footpath from Meeth in West Devon through to Lynton and Lynmouth on the edge of Exmoor. The 32 mile section of the route between Meeth and Braunton runs along former railway lines, suitable for cycling, walking, running and wheelchair use. Beyond Braunton, the route is primarily footpath coinciding with the South West Coast Path and passes close to each of the North Devon Surfing Beaches (see Fig. 2.3). The Tarka Trail, and the range of coastal communities that it links, is also the focus of the Tarka Trail Coastal Community Team, which at the time of writing was preparing its own Economic Plan. In relation to transport and access to the Surf Beaches and the wider promotion of the Tarka Trail as an attraction in its own right, there will be opportunities to link with a number of their CCT projects.

The North Devon Surfing Beaches area

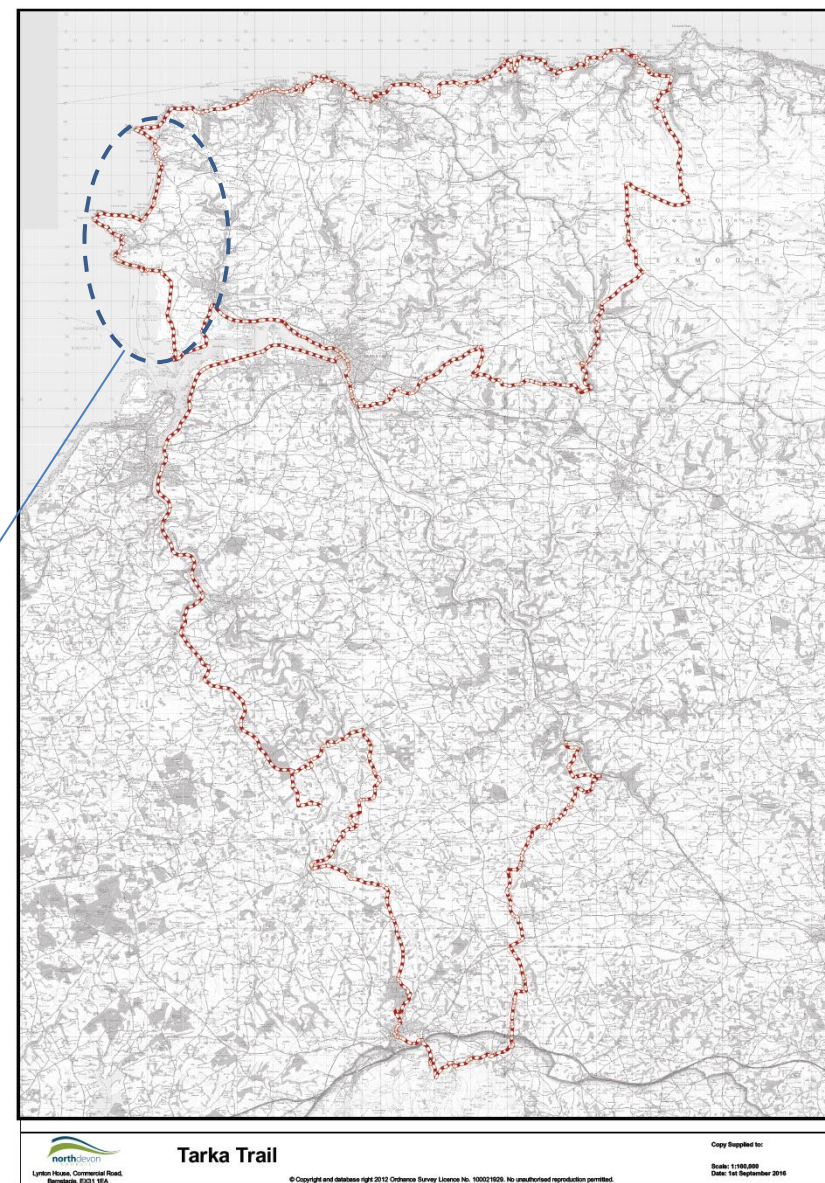


Figure 2.3 The Tarka Trail

3. Methods

3.1. *About the Coastal Community Team*

This plan has been assembled and produced by the North Devon Surfing Beaches Coastal Community Team (CCT). It represents the aspirations, views and priorities of a community of interest with a common focus on the long-term sustainability of the beaches and of surfing activity in the area. This is an informal group which came together under a common purpose with representation drawn from key stakeholders.

Members of the team include representation from:

North Devon Council

Landowners

Private businesses e.g. surf hire, surf schools, watersports operators, other tourism-related businesses

National Trust

Surf Clubs

Surf Life Saving Clubs

Surf Life Saving GB

RNLI

Schools

North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

The Museum of British Surfing

The Wave Project

3.2. *How our plan was developed*

We have developed our Economic Plan as a group over a period of time and across a number of meetings in order to: (a) agree the key aims and objectives for our plan; (b) assess the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the beaches as sustainable resources for surfing, community participation and for the development of the growing surf economy; (c) identify key priorities where we will focus our attention and energy; and (d) capture and scope ideas for projects that respond to the issues and opportunities in our area and the priorities that we agreed. Through further discussion and wider consultation, we have refined our thoughts and focus to arrive at this plan, which you are reading today.

Within our discussions, two priority areas in particular were highlighted: (a) improving the facilities for surfing on the North Devon Surfing Beaches so that they reflect the excellent surf conditions that we have, and the potential to grow the surf economy locally; and (b) increasing participation in surfing in the area by addressing the range of barriers to access so that all are able to benefit from the resources that we have, whether they live close to the beaches or not. Our Action Plan in Section 8 is structured around these two priorities.

Circumstances are always changing and this Plan will need to be a living document. We expect that new issues and opportunities will emerge and our focus will need to respond accordingly. As the Coastal Community Team for the North Devon Surfing Beaches, we will regularly review and update our Plan and continue to drive forward project implementation on behalf of our coastal communities.

4. Our Plan – aims & objectives

The North Devon coast is a very peripheral and rural area. We do not have access to major sporting arenas and stadia that are available in towns and cities to inspire our young people or to draw visitors, but we do have world class beaches and surfing conditions which are significant attractions for visitors and residents alike. These are highly valued resources for which there is growing demand nationally and internationally, but we have a long way to go to match the performance of neighbouring Cornwall in developing the surf economy.

Today, the North Devon Surfing Beaches compete in a global market and we need to provide comparable, if not better, facilities to those provided elsewhere in the UK. But we also need to do this in a manner that does not damage the high quality environment and marine resources that make surfing in North Devon a unique experience, and does not preclude anyone from enjoying the personal benefits that surfing can bring. These challenges are the focus of our Economic Plan.

Our vision is for the North Devon Surfing Beaches to become the focus for a sustainable and high value surf economy that brings opportunity and employment to the area and encourages the participation of all to increase quality of life.

The aim of our Economic Plan is to safeguard and develop the North Devon surf economy by improving the surfing experience on the North Devon Surfing Beaches and making it more accessible to all user groups.

Our objectives are:

- To improve beach facilities and services to enable the area to compete with surf destinations nationally and internationally.
- To increase participation in surfing year round on the North Devon Surfing Beaches.
- To remove barriers to participation locally, enabling more residents, particularly young people, to enjoy surfing.
- To improve safety on the Surfing Beaches.
- To act as custodians for our Surfing Beaches and protect our world class environment

5. Community needs and supporting data

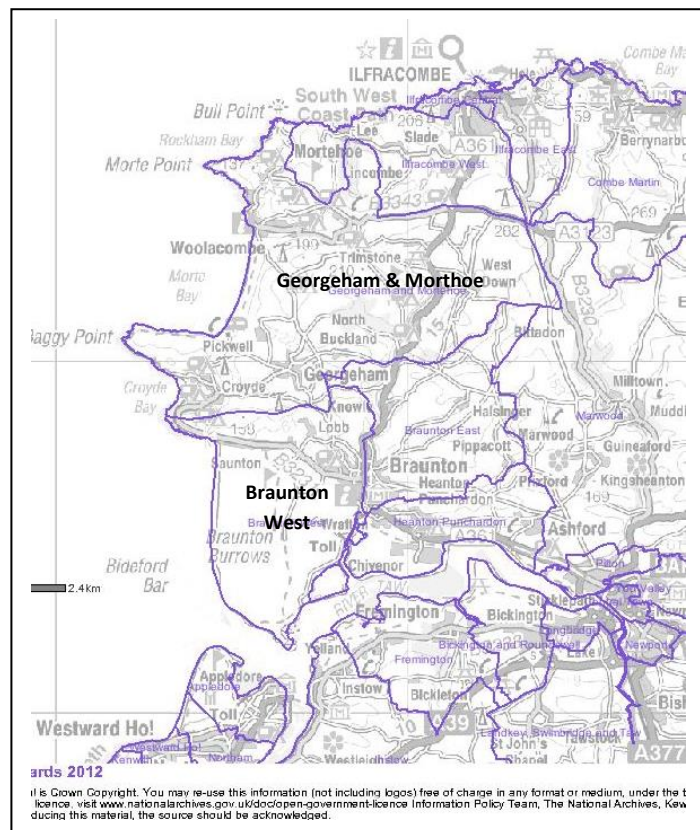


Figure 5.1 The Electoral Ward areas

The Surfing Beaches fall within the Electoral Wards of Braunton West and Georgeham & Morthoe (G&M) (see Fig. 5.1). These two wards also encompass the nearby village communities of Woolacombe, Morteheo, Georgeham, Croyde and Braunton (west part only). Socio-economic data highlight the key characteristics of these areas.

Demography – the population is growing, and in Braunton West growth has outstripped the district and national averages, reflecting the area’s popularity and as a location for retirement

- At the last Census (2011), the two wards had a joint population of 7,877 (4,129 in Braunton West and 3,748 in G&M). Together the two wards accounted for 8.4% of the district’s overall population.
- Since the previous Census (2001), the population had grown by 8.5% in Braunton West and 3.7% in G&M, compared to 7.0% growth across the whole of North Devon and 7.8% nationally.
- Compared to the national average (4.1/Ha), population densities in both wards were both low – 1.7/Ha in Braunton West and 0.8/Ha in G&M.
- The area has high numbers of older age groups – at the last Census (2011), more than a quarter of residents in Braunton West (28.4%) and more than a fifth in G&M (22.4%) were aged 65 and over, compared to only 22.2% across the district and 19.6% nationally.
- In 2001, 7.1% of residents within Braunton West and 8.5% in G&M were retired, compared to 6.4% across and North Devon and 4.9% nationally.
- By 2037⁶, over a quarter of the population of the South West (28.4%) is projected to be aged 65 and over, a level that has already been reached in Braunton West.

⁶ Subnational Population Projections, ONS (2014)

Health – residents are generally in good health, comparable to the wider district

- At the last Census, more than three quarters of residents described themselves as being in ‘good’ or ‘very good’ health (78.9% in Braunton West and 85.3% in G&M), compared to 80.25 across North Devon and 81.5% across England.
- Only 1 in 20 felt that they were in ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ health (5.4% in Braunton West and 4.1% in G&M), compared to 5.6% for the whole of North Devon and 5.4% for the whole of England.

Economic activity – whilst there are a number of key employers in the Braunton area, there are high levels of self-employment, particularly within tourism – most businesses in the area are very small

- At the last Census, 81.9% of working age residents in Braunton West were economically active; 79.4% in G&M, which was in line with the district average (79.6%), but above the national average (76.2%).
- Self-employment was particularly high in G&M at almost 1 in 4 of all working aged residents (22.8%). In Braunton West, which includes a number of important manufacturing businesses, self-employment was in line with the North Devon average at 15.8%, but still much higher than the national average (10.4%).
- There is a high dependency upon tourism locally for employment. In 2013 in the Braunton area, more than 1 in 4 jobs were within ‘Accommodation & food services’ (25.57%), compared to less than 1 in 10 across the county (9.88%)⁷. Manufacturing accounted for almost 1 in 6 jobs (15.95%) compared to only 8.27% across Devon.
- Like most of North Devon, part-time employment at the last Census (2011) was particularly high – 34.2% in Braunton West and 32.7% in G&M, which was in line with the North Devon average (33.8%), but higher than the national figure (29.7%). Many of the jobs within tourism are seasonal and are often associated with low pay and low skills.
- Unemployment is low. In January 2017, there were 25 people unemployed within the Braunton area, which equates to 0.3% of the working age population which was less than half the level for the whole of Devon (0.7%)⁸.
- Most businesses within the district are very small. In 2016, three quarters (76.9%) employed fewer than 5 employees⁹ compared to a national average of 78.0%. On the ground, this proportion is likely to be even higher as National Statistics do not include businesses without employees and below the VAT threshold.

⁷ Devon County Council (2017) *Facts & Figures*

⁸ Devon County Council (2017) *Facts & Figures*

- Only 1.0% of businesses had 100 or more employees, compared to 1.3% across England.

Income – in national terms, the district is a low income area, with high levels of dependency on benefits and housing affordability issues

- Figures for income levels are not available at Electoral Ward level, but North Devon as a whole has a reputation for being a low pay economy, reflecting its peripheral location and dependency on low pay sectors. In 2016, average weekly gross pay in North Devon was £389.00 per week, which was only 73.1% of the national average (£532.00 per week)¹⁰.
- Across the district as a whole in 2011, 1 in 4 households were in receipt of tax credits¹¹.
- Housing affordability is a district-wide issue. In 2015, the ratio of house prices to earnings in North Devon¹² was 9.19, compared to an England average of 7.02.
- At the last Census, more than three quarters of residents in Braunton West and G&M (76.8% in both cases), lived in owner occupier dwellings (mortgaged or owned outright), compared to 69.4% across the district as a whole and 64.8% nationally.

Education & skills – skills and qualification levels are relatively high for the area and for the country as a whole

- Higher level skills (NVQ4+) are associated with higher levels of productivity. At the last Census (2011), more than a third of G&M working age residents (33.8%) had NVQ4+ qualifications as did 28.3% in Braunton West, compared to only 24.7% across the district and 29.7% nationally.
- Only 1 in 10 of working age residents of G&M (10.1%) had no qualifications and 1 in 8 in Braunton West (12.8%), compared to 1 in 7 across North Devon (14.5%) and nationally (15.0%).
- In 2013/14 the proportion of pupils in the Braunton area gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was 71.1% compared to 68.1% for the whole of Devon.

Tourism activity – North Devon is a popular tourism destination area – tourism provides significant business opportunities and employment

- In 2015, North Devon attracted an estimated 993,000 staying visitors staying for a total of 4.6 million visitor nights, and spending over £242 million. The area also attracted almost 3 million day visitors, spending more than £101 million. In total, tourism was worth more than £406 million to the North Devon economy.¹³

⁹ UK Business: Activity, Size & Location 2016

¹⁰ ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016 (provisional results), based on place of work

¹¹ Geographic analyses, HM Revenue & Customs and Census Household Estimates, April 2011

¹² ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings and HM Land Registry 2015

- The industry supports an estimated 8,119 jobs in North Devon, the equivalent of 17% of all jobs in the district.
- Nationally, amongst GB staying visitors in 2015 'visiting a beach' was the 5th most popular activity undertaken on a trip after 'just relaxing', 'sightseeing on foot', 'a short walk or stroll' and 'sightseeing by car.'¹⁴

Surfing & watersports – the surf economy provides significant opportunities for growth in North Devon

- In 2013, a total of 14.1 million people participated in one or more forms of watersports in the previous 12 months, which represented almost 1 in 3 of the UK adult population (28.8%)¹⁵.
- In 2009, watersports were estimated to be worth £80 million to the northern Devon economy (North Devon and Torridge combined) and to support over 2,000 jobs.¹⁶
- In 2008 surfing-related expenditure alone was estimated to be worth £52.1 million to the northern Devon economy and supported 1,470 jobs¹⁷. This study also revealed:
 - In 2008, approximately 42,000 people surfed in northern Devon, including residents and visitors. Each of them spent an average of £1,240 per year in relation to their surfing visits.
 - Surfing was a prime reason for visiting the area – 80% had previously chosen a holiday destination primarily in order to surf. The quality of surf was the number one factor important in the selection of destinations.
 - Visitors from outside the area visited North Devon on average more than five times per year in order to surf.
 - The most popular beaches were on the North Devon coast – Woolacombe, Saunton, Croyde and Putsborough - which together accounted for 81.3% of visits.
- In neighbouring Cornwall, in 2010 watersports were estimated to be worth £295m to the Cornish economy (Cornwall Development Company 2010), which highlights the scope for growth in northern Devon.

¹³ The South West Research Co. (2015)

¹⁴ GB Tourism Survey 2015

¹⁵ Arkenford (2013) *Watersports Participation Survey*

¹⁶ NEA2 (2009) *The value of the watersports economy in North Devon*

¹⁷ Trisurf (2008), *The economic value of surfing in North Devon*

6. SWOT analysis of the North Devon Surfing Beaches

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Devon is a very popular tourist destination - Very accessible to Bristol and London - High quality landscape - within the AONB & UNESCO Biosphere Reserve - High marine quality & wildlife – within new Marine Conservation Zone - Excellent beaches - Excellent surfing conditions – national/international champions use the beaches - A range of safe and easy surf spots - Surfing is a year-round activity - Strong Surf Clubs & Surf Life Saving Clubs - Extensive, long season lifeguard service - Beaches are within private ownership (owners may invest) - Surfing has significant benefits for mental and physical health - Strong surfing community - willingness of locals to work together - Range of festivals and events in the area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Few facilities for surfers (e.g. France and Portugal have excellent facilities) - Showers on the beaches - Toilet facilities could be improved - Limited/poor facilities for Surf Life Saving Clubs - Lack of changing facilities, particularly in winter months - Cost of parking - prohibitive for some - Poor beach access, cycle paths etc. - Disability access e.g. Croyde is not wheelchair friendly - Limited access to the beaches by alternative modes of transport (other than car) - Limited secure storage (buses will not take surfboards) - Beaches are within private ownership (within the control of individuals) - No lifeguards on Putsborough or Saunton Sands - Lack of charging points in beach car parks for electric cars |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local partnerships between Surf Lifesaving Clubs and Surf Clubs - Shared facilities for Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs, RNLI, schools - Develop community life-saving plans involving clubs/private business/RNLI - Youth development programmes - Extending the season through better facilities - Climate change - warmer winters are extending the season - Improve safety signs – live electronic signs - Solar-powered showers and lights - A Junior Lifeguard prog. (7-16 yrs) incl. beach education, awareness, fitness - Establish a World Surfing Reserve to protect conditions and habitats - Beach education programmes and partnerships e.g. for visitors, schools - Work with hire businesses to improve safety e.g. monitor stand up paddle hire - Develop festivals & events on beaches e.g. expanded GoldCoast Oceanfest - Marine wildlife watching trips - Use local school facilities for complementary activities e.g. Woolacombe School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Out-of-hours and out-of-season there is no safety cover and supervision - Non patrolled/lifeguarded beaches – risk to life and reputation of the area - Climate change, sea level rise, more extreme weather - Erosion and sea encroachment issues around some beach buildings - Beach waste – keeping beaches clean, getting commercial waste removed - Variable water quality - Marine litter - plastics are increasing, a worsening global problem - Over trampling by large numbers of people degrades the sand dunes - Some beaches do not have RNLI cover - Car park prices keeping people away - Lack of public transport, cost of transport - High second home ownership in coastal communities - Low engagement with specific groups and generations - Jet skis (noise on a tranquil coast, impact on people and wildlife) - Local resistance to change |

7. Our priorities

In response to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the North Devon Surfing Beaches, our Economic Plan focuses upon two key priorities:

| <i>Priority</i> | <i>Rationale</i> | <i>What we want to achieve</i> |
|--|---|--|
| <p>a. Improving facilities for surfing whilst protecting the unique environment</p> | <p>North Devon offers world class surfing conditions and beaches. North Devon’s Surfing Beaches are vitally important assets for the visitor economy. Surfing and watersports in general make a very sizeable contribution and support many jobs. However there is a long way to go to match the potential shown in neighbouring Cornwall.</p> <p>The facilities in North Devon are generally poor in comparison and the area needs to invest to safeguard and develop this important market.</p> | <p><i>Within six months:</i> (a) Initial beach user research completed; (b) Beaches Working Group established; (c) World Surfing Reserve status achieved</p> <p><i>Within five years:</i> (a) new facilities on all beaches e.g. toilets, changing rooms, electric car charging; (b) projects to improve beach water quality commenced</p> <p><i>Beyond five years:</i> (a) shared Surf and Surf Life Saving Club facilities on each beach</p> |
| <p>b. Increasing local and safe participation in surfing year round</p> | <p>The North Devon Surfing Beaches are also critical community resources, not just for the villages and settlements along the coast, but also for residents within the area’s largest towns and inland from the coast. The coastal environment and surfing activity have important health and well being benefits (physical and mental health). Some children in Barnstaple have never seen the sea and cannot afford to access the beaches.</p> <p>Measures to overcome the range of barriers to access and participation, for both residents and visitors, will have important social as well as economic benefits.</p> | <p><i>Within six months:</i> (a) Community Life Saving and Safety Plan established; (b) marketing and promotion of the Surf and Surf Life Saving Clubs commenced</p> <p><i>Within five years:</i> (a) programmes to engage young people commenced e.g. surf therapy, Beach Rangers, Sea Schools; (b) winter training programmes set up; (c) regular beach cleaning programmes on all beaches and in response to extreme events</p> <p><i>Beyond five years:</i> (a) improved public transport access; (b) cycle route and footpath access enhanced</p> |

8. Our plan

8.1. Improving facilities for surfing

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Key project (title) F1. Research | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Data and understanding, a basis for informed decision making in relation to new facilities and initiatives | Lead & key partners CCT, landowners, NDC | Estimated cost £5,000 | Possible funding AONB |
| Description & rationale: Beach usage audit and surveys to understand how the surfing beaches are used throughout the year, including demand for different types of facilities and willingness to pay. This project will be undertaken at an early stage to help inform other activities and projects within this Economic Plan. | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time and resources, funding | | |
| | | Next steps & dates - Research plan - scoping/costing of surveys/audit; design and testing of surveys Implementation – short term (within 6 months), ongoing research schedule medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) F2. Beaches working group | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Joined up understanding and decision-making | Lead & key partners Members of the CCT | Estimated cost Time resource | Possible funding n/a |
| Description & rationale: Establish regular working group of stakeholders in North Devon Surfing Beaches to discuss issues in the round and make suggestions and recommendations to the CCT. A wider discussion group to inform and bring forward key projects. | | Resources required to deliver: Stakeholder time, venue, expenses | | |
| | | Next steps & dates - Agree terms of reference Implementation – short term (within 6 months) | | |

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| Key project (title) F3. Hot showers on surf beaches | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART New facilities for visitors/residents, increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners Landowners, CCT, NDC | Estimated cost £30,000 | Possible funding CCF, RDPE, Leader5, landowners' match |
| Description & rationale: Installing hot showers (solar powered preferred) on each of the Surfing Beaches to improve facilities for surfers and other beach users. Aim for first to be installed within the first 12 months. Option to include within proposed shared facilities for Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs and the RNLI on each beach (see Project F.6) | | Resources required to deliver: Project time | | |
| | | Next steps & dates - Research demand, site/options appraisals, quotations, planning permissions, funding Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) ; aim for first to be implemented within 6 months (short-term) | | |
| Key project (title) F4. Toilets | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART New facilities where appropriate for visitors/residents, increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners Landowners, CCT, NDC | Estimated cost £20,000 | Possible funding CCF, RDPE, Leader5, landowners' match |
| Description & rationale: Ensure year-round toilet provision on each of the surf beaches to improve facilities for surfers and other beach users. Toilet facilities are currently in place at all beaches but vary in quality and would ideally need extended winter opening hours. There may be an option to include within proposed shared facilities for Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs and the RNLI on each beach (see Project F.6) | | Resources required to deliver: Project time, funding | | |
| | | Next steps & dates - Research demand, site/options appraisals, quotations, planning permissions, funding Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) ; extending winter opening hours if demand is there could be implemented within 6 months (short-term) | | |
| Key project (title) F5. Changing rooms on surf beaches | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART New facilities for visitors/residents, increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners Landowners, CCT, NDC | Estimated cost £30,000 | Possible funding CCF, LEADER 5, RDPE |
| Description & rationale: Ensure year-round provision on each of the surf beaches to improve facilities for surfers and other beach users. There is currently varied provision for changing on the Surfing Beaches, with beach huts at Woolacombe and Saunton for example. Option to include within proposed shared facilities for Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs and the RNLI on each beach (see Project F.6) | | Resources required to deliver: Project time, funding | | |
| | | Next steps & dates - Research demand, site/options appraisals, quotations, planning permissions, funding Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |

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| Key project (title) F6. Shared Surf Club, Surf Life Saving Club and RNLI facilities | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Improved safety, new facilities for visitors/residents, increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs, RNLI, landowners, CCT | Estimated cost £1m | Possible funding RDPE, Sport England, CCF, Visit England |
| Description & rationale: Not all of the beaches have a lifesaving presence or facilities for the local Surf Club. Where there are facilities, these are typically inadequate to meet current and future needs. There is an opportunity to established shared facilities at each beach which could become focal points for surfing activity. Could also include public showers, toilets, changing and board storage facilities (see Projects F3-F5). | | Resources required to deliver: Project working groups, budget to develop proposals Next steps & dates - Convene working groups, project plans, fundraising Implementation – long term (5+ years) | | |
| Key project (title) F7. Improving disabled and safe access to the beaches | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners Landowners, NDC, CCT | Estimated cost £5,000 | Possible funding CCF, Leader5 |
| Description & rationale: There are disabled access issues on some of the beaches and for some of the facilities (e.g. Croyde). Action is required to increase physical access – a range of measures may be required. | | Resources required to deliver: Project management time, budgets Next steps & dates - Accessibility Audits of each beach and facilities, identify key barriers and required actions Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) F8. BBQ and outside eating areas | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART New facilities for visitors/residents, increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners Landowners, CCT, NDC | Estimated cost £2,000 | Possible funding Leader5, CCF, AONB |
| Description & rationale: Create new ‘after surf’ eating and barbequing areas at each beach to provide new facilities and reduce beach litter from shoreline fires and barbeques. Take into consideration control and maintenance of sites. | | Resources required to deliver: Project management time, budgets Next steps & dates – Research demand, review site options draw up proposals, planning applications Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |

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| Key project (title) F9. Electric car charging points | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Reduced emissions & carbon footprint, new facilities for visitors, Increased visits, spend and associated employment | Lead & key partners NDC, landowners, CCT | Estimated cost £1,500 per point, say £12,000 | Possible funding Govt OLEV grants |
| Description & rationale: Establish charging points at each Surfing Beach car park to create new and less environmentally impactful transport options for beach users | | Resources required to deliver: Project management time Next steps & dates Survey and agreement of suitable sites, planning permissions, grant applications Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) F10. Improving beach water quality where/when required | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Improve water quality | Lead & key partners CCT, Biosphere Reserve, AONB, EA | Estimated cost TBC | Possible funding TBC |
| Description & rationale: Initiatives that will improve beach water quality where necessary, including a combination of (a) direct on-beach measures (e.g. reducing beach litter and avoiding dog mess getting into the water); and (b), engagement with key agencies to support interventions that increase the cleanliness of rivers and streams feeding into the beaches (e.g. reducing contamination of upstream catchment areas). | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time, volunteer time, funding Next steps & dates Bring together partner group, identify and assess range/extent of existing mitigation, contaminant sources, develop action plan Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) F11. World Surfing Reserve status | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Protect surf conditions, increase awareness, participation, visits and expenditure | Lead & key partners All members of CCT, Surf Museum | Estimated cost Time resource as required | Possible funding AONB if required |
| Description & rationale: Increase national and international awareness of the North Devon Surfing Beaches and their historic importance, and protect their future by seeking the international designation of ‘World Surfing Reserve’. The Reserve programme provides a global model for preserving wave breaks and their surrounding areas by recognising and protecting the key environmental, cultural, historical, economic, and community attributes of surfing areas. | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time, funding Next steps & dates Assess outline eligibility, application process and financial implications, form project team Implementation – short term (within 6 months) | | |

8.2. Increasing participation

| Key project (title) | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART | Lead & key partners | Estimated cost | Possible funding |
|---|---|--|----------------|---------------------|
| P1. Community Lifesaving & Safety Plan | Improved beach safety, safer exercise, increased visits through safe beach reputation | Landowners, RNLI, Surf Life Saving Clubs, Surf Schools, NDC, CCT, Surfing England | £5,000 | Sport England, AONB |
| Description & rationale: Safe beaches and safe surfing are fundamental to the surf economy. This project will create a joined-up strategy and action plan to make people aware of dangers in the water to include visitors, residents, clubs and schools. Scope to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lifeguard and safety training ▪ Communication, social media ▪ Individual beach assessments and action plans ▪ Lifeguard coverage policy throughout the year and at key tide times ▪ Funding | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time, funding | | |
| | | Next steps & dates Partnership meetings, strategy development, management plan, budgets, fundraising Implementation – short term (within 6 months) | | |
| P2. Volunteer Training | Improved beach safety, safer exercise, increased visits through safe beach reputation | SLSGB | £500 | In kind time |
| Description & rationale: Training and support to recruit and establish community volunteer patrols on the Surfing Beaches, including life saving activities and skills to provide safety surveillance. A key aim is to combine and integrate lifesaving and surfing interests. The project is based upon the experience of a SLSGB pilot in Cornwall to increase volunteer life guard patrol activity. A key link is with local Surf Life Saving Clubs. | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time | | |
| | | Next steps & dates Partnership meetings, strategy development, management plan Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |

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| <p>Key project (title) P3. Safety updates & signage</p> | <p>What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Safer exercise, increased visits through safe beach reputation</p> | <p>Lead & key partners Landowners, Parish Councils, RNLI, Surf Life Saving Clubs, Surf Clubs, NDC, Surfing England</p> | <p>Estimated cost £15,000</p> | <p>Possible funding Leader5, Sponsorship, AONB, DEFRA</p> |
| <p>Description & rationale: Real time updates and notification of surf conditions on each of the beaches, including on-beach signage and notices, social media, mobile web pages. Part of the Community Lifesaving & Safety Plan.</p> | | <p>Resources required to deliver: Partner/management time, funding Next steps & dates - Review communication needs/requirements, raise spec, fundraising Implementation – medium term (within 5 years)</p> | | |
| <p>Key project (title) P4. Young people engagement project</p> | <p>What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased participation amongst young people, increased visits, increased membership of Clubs</p> | <p>Lead & key partners Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs, the Wave Project, AONB</p> | <p>Estimated cost £4,000</p> | <p>Possible funding Sport England, AONB</p> |
| <p>Description & rationale: Although there is a sizeable population and many schools within reach of the beaches, surprisingly few young people locally participate in surfing. Residents of North Devon’s most disadvantaged communities, in particular, face multiple barriers to involvement. This project will engage with schools and young people across the district to encourage safe and healthy exercise through surfing, building on existing initiatives. Key links and potential partners are the Wave Project and their work using surf therapy, and the AONB Coastal Creatures programme (see Section 2.4).</p> | | <p>Resources required to deliver: Project officer time, budget Next steps & dates Project terms of reference, engagement with young people to flesh out problems and potential solutions, project proposal, fundraising Implementation – medium term (within 5 years)</p> | | |
| <p>Key project (title) P5. 16+ young lifeguard training</p> | <p>What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased participation, increased activities for young people, improved beach safety</p> | <p>Lead & key partners Surf Life Saving Clubs, RNLI</p> | <p>Estimated cost £4,000</p> | <p>Possible funding AONB, Sport England</p> |
| <p>Description & rationale: Establish and support a clear route for young people to train to become local lifeguards. The 16+ model was developed in Australia and has been piloted in St Agnes, Cornwall.</p> | | <p>Resources required to deliver: Partner time, budget Next steps & dates - Learn from the St Agnes pilot, develop local proposals, seek funding Implementation – medium term (within 5 years)</p> | | |

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| Key project (title) P6. Beach Ranger and Beach Guardian programme | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased community participation and visits, increased activities for young people, improved beach quality | Lead & key partners CCT, Biosphere Reserve, AONB, Landowners | Estimated cost £4,000 | Possible funding AONB |
| Description & rationale: Project to change the beach culture locally by encouraging users to act as Beach Custodians, to safeguard the quality of the beach. Also scope to develop a Junior Beach Ranger programme to increase understanding of the beach environment amongst young people and the importance of protecting this environment. This project is based upon experience of a similar project in the Orkney and Shetland Isles. | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time, budget | | |
| | | Next steps & dates Bring together ideas, develop proposals, seek funding Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) P7. Marketing & promotion of Surf Clubs & Surf Life Saving Clubs | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased participation and visits, increased activities for young people | Lead & key partners Surf Clubs, Surf Life Saving Clubs, RNLI | Estimated cost £4,000 | Possible funding AONB |
| Description & rationale: Promotion of the range of surf and surf life saving club opportunities on the North Devon Surfing Beaches to young people and potential volunteers in the North Devon area; and to increase general awareness of club activities. | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time, budget | | |
| | | Next steps & dates Develop brief, discussion with creative agencies Implementation – short term (within 6 months) | | |
| Key project (title) P8. Sea Schools | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased participation and visits | Lead & key partners CCT, schools, Surf & Surf Life Saving Clubs, Biosphere Res, AONB | Estimated cost £10,000 | Possible funding RDPE, AONB |
| Description & rationale: Develop holiday 'Sea Schools' to increase coastal activity options during the school holidays, including introduction to surfing and beach safety. | | Resources required to deliver: Management time to develop, budget | | |
| | | Next steps & dates School engagement, develop programme Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |

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| Key project (title) P9. Winter training programmes | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased participation and visits | Lead & key partners CCT, schools, Surf & Surf Life Saving Clubs, NDC | Estimated cost TBC | Possible funding TBC |
| Description & rationale: Use indoor pool and leisure centre facilities for winter training programmes, in particular to appeal to young people living away from the Surfing Beaches and from within disadvantaged communities. | | Resources required to deliver: Partner time, budget | | |
| | | Next steps & dates School engagement, develop programme Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) P10. Beach clean strategies | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased community involvement, enhance surfing beaches, encourage increased visits & expenditure | Lead & key partners Landowners, all CCT partners | Estimated cost Cost of waste disposal | Possible funding Sponsorship, volunteer time |
| Description & rationale: Establish a ‘beach clean strategy’ for the beaches where required involving local residents, businesses, and all CCT partners in maintaining the quality of these primary community assets e.g. regular beach cleans and in response to extreme events | | Resources required to deliver: Management time, volunteers | | |
| | | Next steps & dates Form project group, action planning Implementation – medium term (within 5 years) | | |
| Key project (title) P11. Public transport access | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased access and participation, visits, spend and associated employment, reduced congestion | Lead & key partners CCT, NDC, DCC, public transport companies, landowners | Estimated cost TBC | Possible funding TBC |
| Description & rationale: Review public transport access to the beaches (bus, rail), including timetables, siting of bus stops, carriage of surfboards, and develop a range of measures to encourage and increase car-free access to the beaches. | | Resources required to deliver: Project officer time, budget | | |
| | | Next steps & dates User research, engagement with public transport operators Implementation – long term (5+ years) | | |

| Key project (title) | What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART | Lead & key partners | Estimated cost | Possible funding |
|---|---|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| P12. Cycle and footpath access | Increased access and participation, visits, spend and associated employment, reduced congestion | CCT, NDC, DCC, Tarka Trail CCT, landowners, Sustrans | £75,000 | Leader5, RDPE, Sustrans, DCC |
| <p>Description & rationale:</p> <p>Increase cycle and foot access to Surfing Beaches from communities and key public transport routes in the area though:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential links and signage to and from the Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path ▪ Secure storage for cycles at each of the Surfing Beaches ▪ Secure storage for surfboards at each of the Surfing Beaches <p>Potential links with Project F6 and the Tarka Trail CCT</p> | | <p>Resources required to deliver: Project officer time, budget</p> <p>Next steps & dates</p> <p>User engagement, develop brief and specifications, funding applications</p> <p>Implementation – long term (5+ years)</p> | | |

Abbreviations

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|-------|---|
| AONB | North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| CCF | Coastal Communities Fund |
| DCC | Devon County Council |
| DEFRA | Dept for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs |
| EA | Environment Agency |
| HLF | Heritage Lottery Fund |
| NDC | North Devon Council |
| OLEV | Office of Low Emission Vehicles |
| RDPE | Rural Development Programme for England |
| RNLI | Royal National Lifeboat Institute |
| SDF | Sustainable Development Fund |
| SLSGB | Surf Life Saving GB |

9. Barriers & risks to implementing our plan

| Identified barriers/risks | Impact | Likelihood | Overall | How we will manage/overcome |
|--|--------|------------|---------|---|
| (a) Not being able to secure funding | High | Med | Med | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have identified a range of potential funding sources for each of our projects - Only joined-up and thought through projects supported by the CCT will be brought forward as fundable projects - We have bid-writing expertise within the CCT |
| (b) Not being able to get key stakeholder support for projects | High | Med | Med | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the first time our CCT brings together the range of key stakeholders across each of the Surfing Beaches within a single forum - Our Economic Plan is based upon discussion, prioritisation and consensus - On all projects, we will work with and engage landowners and beach users to ensure mutual benefits |
| (c) Delay or non-delivery of key projects | Med | Med | Med | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have wide experience of project development and management within the CCT - For each of our projects we have identified lead organisations and key partners to drive implementation - We will oversee and receive updates on the progress of each project |
| (d) Obtaining planning permission for projects | High | Low | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will have early discussions with the Planning Authority to anticipate and respond to any relevant Planning issues with our projects - We will work closely with conservation and environmental groups, and all CCT partners to develop scalable, appropriately designed projects |
| (e) Landowner participation | High | Med | Med | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landowner representation is included within our CCT - Landowners will be closely involved in each project - Mutual benefits must be obvious in all projects that are developed |