

Torbay Green Infrastructure Project Development Workshop

1st April 9.30 – 3.00pm The Grand Hotel

Workshop Report

1. Background

A workshop was held for Torbay Council Officers, Councillors and key stakeholders as the precursor to a year-long process of developing the Torbay Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

This workshop was important in establishing a green infrastructure baseline and introduced key stakeholders to the concept and importance of green infrastructure. There were presentations from Kat Deeney, Natural England and Steve Turner, Torbay Council.

The Torbay Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan will provide supporting evidence for the Torbay Core Strategy, and ensure growth is accompanied by a sustainable natural environment that meets the needs of the future. It will also identify strategic green infrastructure delivery mechanisms and foster partnership working towards a sustainable Torbay.

The workshop delegates were split into facilitated workshop groups of mixed interest, and asked to answer a series of questions. The responses have been summarised below.

What does Green Infrastructure mean to you?

- Useable, flexible, connected, multifunctional space
- Accessible, local and inviting
- Quality of life
- Joined up agendas and agencies working together

A total of 43 delegates attended the workshop.

2. Torbay Green Infrastructure SWOT analysis

The groups were asked to think about Torbay's green infrastructure strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The responses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: A SWOT analysis of Torbay's Green Infrastructure.

Torbay Green Infrastructure Strengths	Torbay Green Infrastructure Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fabulous natural assets and vistas (coast, marine, biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and seascape) • Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust • Access to a lot of our major assets e.g. Occombe/Cockington/Berry Head • Torbay Council owns a lot of natural assets • Good partnerships in place e.g. community partnerships, SeaTorbay, Friends of Parks Groups, Play partnerships, Transition Towns • Green wedges • Multifunctional greenspace with community ownership • Community supported agriculture and food production projects • Willingness across Local Authority to improve and develop GI and work joined up. • Chance to embed in Core Strategy • Transport network and footpaths e.g. coast path and John Musgrave Trail • Community engagement • Historic parks and gardens • Highest density of trees in SW • Environmental education resource e.g. Berry Head • Private sector engagement e.g. Paignton Zoo and Kents Cavern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding, knowledge, commitment from members/community and officers. • Competing uses for land and tensions about how the land is used e.g. Ilsham Valley Play park. • Spaces that are 'fit for use', often lots of space but in the wrong place and needs to be central rather than leftovers and accessible to a wide range of people (especially deprived areas) • Promoting inappropriate sites for development • Planning: GI tends to be lower down the priority list • Funding/viability/resources – sustainable long-term • Fragmented, overused and threatened with further damage and loss of gardens • Levels of deprivation and need for affordable housing • Lack of greenspace and recreation provision e.g. football • Connections – cycleways and coast path fragmented • Sense of local ownership • Making places safe • Flooding – also an opportunity • Trees and woodland – victorian legacy and need for space. Not enough Street Trees. • Access to allotments and local food system • Section 106 system not linked up • Tourism promotion • Partnership working with neighbours • Led by housing numbers rather than strategic approach • No renewable energy strategy

Torbay Green Infrastructure Opportunities	Torbay Green Infrastructure Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth - compensation green areas in urban areas that are deficient and where poor housing and poor access. Harness benefits of growth for GI. • Development needs to create new greenspace and GI should be at the start of all designs at a strategic level. Educate engineers to value green solutions and use best practice and integrate GI e.g. solar panels, community heating through biomass. • Education and involvement – where are the green areas and promote to children/adults and increase engagement with the environment. Volunteering and community inclusion e.g local food and allotments • Planning – opportunity to think more holistically and not so site specific. • Link GI to health, recreation, climate change. • Funding - Align/pool budgets to collectively deliver and get better value. More S106 money in SUDS and greenspace and Community Infrastructure Levy (tariff for developers) • Flood alleviation – ponds/reedbeds/coastal habitat recreation and woodland planting • Blue space • Transport – sustainable e.g. cycle/footpaths, water transport and open Churston-Brixham line? • Tourism and appropriate green niche markets. Geopark and cycling, walking, watersports. • Corridors, linkages and networks – link to South Hams and Teignbridge and more street planting of trees. • Energy generation – biomass and woodland planting (Woodland Trust and National Trust) and Newton abbot link. • Closing the gap – deprived areas need more greenspace e.g. local food, parks. Needs particular attention – 10 minute access. • Partnership working – bringing agencies together and work across boundaries. • Biodiversity delivery – Link to Local Biodiversity Action Plan and South West Nature Map • Local Food growing • Big green wedges • Adapting to climate change • Opportunity to be brave, inspirational and step change – speaking with one voice • Integration into existing strategies and LDF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding and resources – ‘GI nice to have rather than necessity’. • Prioritisation – where does GI go on the list? • Over-development and pressure on natural environment – what is the environmental capacity? • Need to enhance – cross business working and cross boundary opportunity and threat • Lack of understanding and knowledge and decision-makers poorly informed • Losing the links between habitats and reduction in habitats • Climate change and sea level rise • Conflict with other objectives and aims • Over-use of areas – long-term maintenance of GI has to be integrated • Inappropriate management mechanisms • Crime perceptions and lighting • Transport – car use • Planning – LDF GI priorities may get watered down through development management process • Urban fringe development – ‘add ons’ GI delivery not incremental and holistic • Global market impacting on food production in rural areas – impact on landscape and local food etc • Future proofing the core strategy and community plans • Growth targets – impact land resource. Where are the environmental limits? • Developer power/demands • Lack of political will • ‘No brigade’ and anti-action groups • Affordability of access to GI • Not implementing agreed standards – S106 pressures • Conflict and overlap and confusion between strategies • Just another document..... • Peak Oil

3. Torbay Green Infrastructure Projects and Themes

In this workshop the group were asked to come up with GI priority projects, these could be new projects or projects that are currently underway that fit into the work of this Green Infrastructure Project. There were big maps of Torbay on their table to highlight the project areas.

The following maps were also on the workshop table for information if needed:

- Accessible greenspace
- Flood risk areas
- Landscape Character Areas
- Designated sites
- Historic Environment

The workshop groups came up with possible projects that fit under seven draft key themes (shown below) and individual project sites and areas.

The key themes were:

- **Sustainable Transport**
- **Energy**
- **Water**
- **Biodiversity**
- **Local Food**
- **People/Healthy communities**
- **Green Wedge Projects**

Summary of themes and project ideas:

1) Sustainable Transport

- Water transport across the Bay
- Rail links – Churston to Brixham
- Sustainable routes to school
- Improve walking routes e.g. John Musgrave Trail
- Cycle routes – LTP, look at old railway lines and electric bike hire.
- Countryside to Coast links

2) Energy

- Generate electricity from outflows
- Biomass Project (150k government grant)
- Biomass store hub (multiple users)
- Woodland management and bio fuel

3) Water

- Flood areas – rainwater harvesting hubs, SUDS and wetland areas enhanced for biodiversity
- Rainwater harvesting hubs
- Shoreline Management plan
- Coastal environment
- Reedbed and wetland park in Clennon

4) Biodiversity

- BAP delivery, SNAs and Nature Map – Churston and Clennon Valley
- Bats and flyways
- Street trees and woodlands
- All new buildings to have green roofs and SUDS as condition of gaining planning consent.
- Dark sky policy - bats

5) Local Food

- Farming Fringe – orchards
- New community projects
- Access local food
- 2000 new allotments

6) People/Healthy communities

- Play improvement
- Access
- New greenspace in deprived areas and with new housing
- Regenerate current parks e.g. Princess gardens, Rock Walk, Barton, Cockington
- Eco-tourism – Geopark?
- Youth – My Place and sports
- Health
- Open up school playing fields ‘out of hours’ for community use.
- Geopark field centre

7) Green wedge projects

Link land to sea and enhance green wedges (connection, landscape, biodiversity and wildlife corridors, access)

Possible Project Sites

- Northern Ridge
- Cockington/Occombe Green Recreation a major asset – community woodland and sustainable high quality tourism development.
- Aller Corridor
- Musgrave Trail corridor
- Berry Head Peninsular Planning
 - biodiversity
 - greenspace
- Princess Garden and Rock Walk
- Barton – Recreation Hub

Existing Projects

- Clennon Valley – habitat management and access
- Cockington – building enhancement, country park and access – quick win.
- Barton – sports, habitats, access and sports hub
- Scadson woods and cycleway
- Parkfield (play and youth) quick win
- Goodrington – mixed in valley

4. Next steps

This workshop was the first step towards developing a Torbay Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The workshop was very successful in establishing a GI baseline and generated enthusiasm and engagement with the green infrastructure project. A wider stakeholder workshop is planned for June.