

District Councillor Report: September 2024

At the most recent Full Council meeting on 15th July, we adopted many strategies related to economic development.

The first one was the Torridge Place Story. This has already been adopted by the Torridge Place Board. It highlighted the opportunities in Torridge including Clean Maritime, Green Energy, Aquaculture, Innovative Agriculture, Creative and Digital Industries, and A Year-Round Sustainable Visitor Economy.

We also adopted the North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy. This sets out a vision for our economic future. It will help inform our policy and new local plan. It identifies 5 key sectors with net zero at the heart. There has been input from both councils (North Devon and Torridge), business leaders, and Universities in Devon.

We then agreed the Clean Maritime Growth vision. It's all about attracting investment into Northern Devon- raising national level investment, and growing traction in Westminster and the private sector.

We also had an X-Links consultation response as a council. As you're probably all aware, these are the 4,000km sub-sea cables bringing solar energy from Morocco. The process is likely to go on for another 2 years. We are a host authority and key consultee, and we are working closely with DCC on this. We are establishing a working group to consider the community benefit package associated with this large infrastructure project. The council is taking guidance from Suffolk and Essex Councils who are also going through NSIPs (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects).

We then adopted the Torridge Productivity Plan. This highlights the challenges including rurality and connectivity and the barriers preventing progress. This was written for central government based on the previous government and "levelling up". It will all still be useful and remains relevant, however we're unsure of exactly what is happening now in terms of the Torridge "levelling up" partnership now that we have a new government in place...

LGA (Local Government Association) Corporate Peer Challenge feedback. The LGA team met with 85 individuals related to the council including councillors, staff, and external partners. There were 30 workshops. It's not considered to be an "inspection", but a "critical friend" approach, providing assurance and assistance to improve what we're doing...

Key findings (positive):

- we're ambitious
- we understand Torridge's challenges
- we have a highly regarded economic development team
- we proactively engage with partners

Recommendations (concerns):

- member development and behaviour, low attendance at workshops
- capacity to deliver strategic plan and major projects (huge amount of work)
- review of procedures
- financial sustainability and savings plans
- need clearer performance measures for climate change
- review of HR policies following reported inconsistencies

A review is scheduled by LGA Feb 2025.