

Portfolio Report for Culture, Sport, Leisure and Tourism.

Scrutiny Committee, East Devon District Council - March 9th 2023.

Introduction:

Over the past two years I have worked with members, officers and consultants to develop and introduce three significant and interlocking strategies, namely those of Culture, Tourism and Leisure. These strategies are significant as they impact upon the lives of residents by providing opportunities and facilities which will enhance health and wellbeing. When cultural activities take place in the district not only do residents benefit but tourists are attracted as well. Every tourist needs hospitality! so this will stimulate economic activity, this is the “catalyst” effect. Exactly the same argument applies to our leisure services, which not only provide significant health benefits for residents but which are also attractive to tourists.

What follows is a detailed report from officers on the operation of relevant strategies. I make no apology for the detailed nature of this report, as members need to be aware of the breadth and scale of the work now being undertaken as well as the impact that such work will have upon meeting the requirements of the council plan.

Tourism.

This section of the report looks specifically at the range of tourism activities undertaken over the last 12 months to support this important sector in East Devon. It focuses on the following areas:

- Tourism context and local landscape
- The Tourism Strategy for East Devon
- East Devon Tourism Network
- EastDevonly campaign
- The IRF funded ‘Coast meets Country’ project
- The UKSPF Sustainable Tourism Fund
- Draft Sustainable Tourism Local Plan Policy

For the first time last year, East Devon District Council invested in the creation of a Tourism strategy, which will inform the support we provide to the tourism sector and galvanises the efforts made by partners and the wider tourism community.

As part of our Council vision, we are striving to provide a healthier, more beautiful natural environment that inspires, educates and involves residents and visitors to East Devon. Tourism plays an integral part of this vision and brings many economic and social benefits, helping support our local cultural activities within our vibrant towns, villages and hamlets.

The ambition of our tourism strategy is for East Devon to become the leading, year-round tourism destination in Devon, whose diverse ecosystem of outstanding natural environments, distinctive, high-quality businesses, set within towns and villages, all thrive and grow through a commitment to Net Zero, accessibility and collaboration.

We have aligned our strategy to our priority goals of carbon reduction and working in partnership with others and, in recognition of the strength of our private sector and local business, believe that the Council should act as an enabler to the sector, addressing gaps in the market and working to support sector development.

The following sets out how we are now delivering that support.

Tourism context and local landscape

According to Visit England, Devon was the fourth most popular visitor destination in England in 2018. Before Covid, East Devon attracted an average of 6.7m visitors a year, worth £352m to the local economy. The District has the third highest number of visitors in Devon, behind Plymouth and Exeter cities, and the second highest expenditure behind Plymouth. East Devon has a strong reputation for the quality of its natural environment, its food and drink offer with quality local producers, wide range of tourist attractions and accommodation providers. The tourism economy is based predominantly on UK tourists, with international visitors worth less than 5% in 2020.

Overall, the tourism sector employs an estimated 3,438 people (2,532 FTE equivalent).

Though the local economy benefitted from the move to local holidays and staycations during the pandemic, it was strongly affected, like all tourism areas, by the economic shocks of the pandemic. Total tourism expenditure fell from the average £352m to just over £155.6m in 2020.

Most companies enjoyed a far more buoyant season in 2021, but this was tempered by people tightening up on spend in 2022 due to the cost of living crisis. The industry remains in a challenging position, underlining the need for a strategic approach to identify how to best support both the recovery and future development of the sector.

East Devon has a strong tourism offer spread across the area. 32% of visitor spend is attributable to our food and drink offer, 21% to accommodation, 20% to shopping and 11% to attractions and entertainment.¹ There are however spatial differences in how tourism and retail assets are deployed with higher vacancy rates on high streets in Axminster (18.1%) and Otter St Mary (12.5%) having a detrimental effect on the visitor experience.

Spatial mapping shows that the provision of serviced accommodation is good, and the self-catering provision is strong across the district with an even spread across the area. There is an even spread of attractions and places to visit across both coastal and inland locations with a slight under-representation in the east of the district.

SWOT analysis of the East Devon's tourism offering outlines the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

¹ Source: *The Economic Impact of the East Devon Visitor Economy 2020 - The South West Research Company Ltd*

STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety and beauty of landscape • Diversity of offer- see, do, stay • Quality and private sector investment in tourism offering • Food and drink offer • Jurassic Coastline • Transport to the region- rail/road/air • Sustainable practices 	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment/staffing- complex issue with many facets • Demographic – weak labour supply of future, younger staff • Transport within East Devon • Diversity of promotional sites • Seasonality- too reliant on high season
OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More collaboration • Increased promotion of food ecosystem • Activities linked to natural environment, bio-diversity/curated trails • Tourism trend for authentic experiences, green & accessible tourism • Quality of product offering 	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current economic downturn - reduced disposable household income • Competition from abroad, Covid carry-over • Rise in costs (business and raw materials)- impacting profitability • Political uncertainty

Tourism Strategy

Within our [Council Plan](#), EDDC members make clear that the overriding priority is to strive for a resilient economy in order to promote prosperity and reduce hardship within the district, increasing the quality of our employment. Our Council Plan specifically recognises the economic as well as the social value of tourism, art and culture to the local economy and the wealth that is generated in those sectors.

A priority action is identified - to deliver a tourism strategy with emphasis on the green economy.

In delivering on that commitment, the Economic Development team within our Growth, Development and Prosperity Service led on the development of a Tourism Strategy for East Devon.

The brief for this work defined that the strategy needed to reflect the district's unique character, take advantage of its key assets, its environmental capital and any opportunities aligned with cultural tourism. It determined that the work should be built on the core principles of sustainability, resilience, innovation, accessibility and inclusivity. It needed to align with the Council's vision for a clean and greener future, with improved accessibility, good quality employment and higher wages across the area.

Following a robust procurement process, a strategy specialist was appointed in May 2022 with strategy development work finalised at the end of July. In September 2022 East Devon District Council adopted the new [Tourism Strategy for East Devon](#). Developed through extensive consultation with the tourism sector and internal stakeholders, the work seeks to support the tourism sector in achieving sustainable growth and in delivering economic benefits to the district.

The document outlines our strategic vision and key objectives in a mid-term 5-year strategy. It has been developed in careful alignment with the [Cultural strategy for East Devon](#), the work streams of which will establish new cultural products, partnerships and promotional activity to grow the creative and visitor economies. The Tourism strategy has also informed EDDC's UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Investment Plan such that a number of relevant projects will be delivered via the Culture, Leisure and Tourism Fund.

The vision of the strategy is for East Devon to become the leading, year-round tourism destination in Devon, whose diverse ecosystem of outstanding natural environments, distinctive, high-quality businesses, set within towns and villages, all thrive and grow through a commitment to Net Zero, accessibility and collaboration. To achieve the vision, the strategy sets six objectives linked to growth, fostering collaboration, net zero and improving accessibility:

1. **A modest increase in the volume of visitors coming to East Devon:** increase visitor numbers to 6.7m in two years (end 2024) and grow by 1% annually to reach 6.9m visitors per year by the end of the strategy (2027).
2. **Increase value of those visitors coming to East Devon:** the strategy will target growing the value of each visitor who comes to the District. We will target average spend per head at £56 by the end of 2022 (a 5% increase), rising by 3% per year to £63/head by year 5. **(NB: To monitor progress against these first 2 objectives, EDDC has committed to procure annual tourism economic impact data to quantify the value and volume of visitor numbers and to track relevant growth).**
3. **Curate and develop 4 product propositions:** create 4 core themes (Natural Diversity, Food and Drink, Active Nature and Visual Arts and Festivals) aimed at developing a year-round tourism offer and growing the numbers of visitors in low season.
4. **Actively support tourism businesses to reduce carbon usage and improve accessibility:** Building on the activity of the Innovation and Resilience Fund project, led by Visit Sidmouth, by aiming to establish “Green Champions” businesses, providing training, mentoring and support to decrease carbon footprint and other environmental goals. We will build on the learnings of this project and implement a new Sustainable Tourism Fund to support the tourism sector to commit to net zero and improve accessibility.
5. **Build a sustainable, collaborative, private sector network:** foster collaboration by supporting the development of an East Devon Tourism Network based on the shared values of quality, net zero, improving accessibility and collaboration. Facilitating partnership working will maximise the potential of the area and provide a platform for the development of the core themes as well as providing industry feedback on challenges such as skills, investment and transport.
6. **Embed the tourism strategy into the wider local policy context:** embed and link the tourism strategy across wider policy areas such as the emerging Local Plan. We will work with colleagues across the council to ensure the tourism strategy vision is supported and influences other policy areas where relevant.

The Role of EDDC

As part of the strategy development, there has been strong feedback to provide greater clarity on the future role of East Devon District Council.

Based on analysis of possible roles and extensive stakeholder engagement, the strategy identified that EDDC should take on the role of **Enabler**, filling gaps in the market and leading policy to facilitate change. To fulfil this role existing Economic Development Officer resource from within the Growth, Prosperity and Development service has been dedicated to work with partners to help to fulfil the tourism strategy vision.

As an Enabler, the council will facilitate growth, drive policy and change by working with third parties/external partners. Resources and funding are being targeted to areas currently not supported by other parties - for example, through our UKSPF £95k East Devon Culture Programme and £210k Sustainable Tourism Fund.

Within the first few months of our Tourism Strategy having been endorsed, the following milestones have been achieved:

- Establish partnership working between the new Cultural Producer role and existing Economic Development Officer resource.
- Procure 2021 tourism impact and visitor spend data as baseline.
- Communicate final strategy to all stakeholders who supported its development.
- Draft a new Sustainable Tourism Policy to inform and strengthen the emerging Local Plan
- Employ SPF funds to procure a local partner to establish and operate a new East Devon Tourism Network

East Devon Tourism Network

One of the key objectives of the tourism strategy is to establish and manage the operation of a tourism sector network for East Devon which will foster collaboration within the sector based on the shared values of quality, net zero, and improved accessibility.

There remains a strong and committed group of visitor economy representatives who helped us develop our strategy and who are keen to continue building on this collaborative approach to support the development of the sector.

To this end, a robust procurement process was initiated which resulted in East Devon Excellence (EDE) being commissioned to develop, manage and support this inclusive network of local businesses and tourism representatives. EDE are a tourism representative organisation with an exceptional commitment to district wide development of the sector and a strong reputation throughout the visitor economy.

As of January 2023, the newly formed East Devon Tourism Network (EDTN) has been established to share best practice, encourage partnership working and provide a website listing of cultural activities taking place across the district. Representing our district wide geography, the network will support the sector to address fragmentation, work more effectively together and encourage sustainable growth. It is envisaged that the network will be a conduit which will allow a valuable exchange of information with tourism businesses operating in East Devon.

EDTN Scope

The network is open to all tourism businesses based in East Devon meeting the following criteria:

- The majority of their business operation is within/relevant to the tourism sector
- They specifically promote to and attract visitors to East Devon
- They provide a visitor experience
- They are committed to the values of promoting quality, working towards net zero, improved accessibility and collaboration and can evidence this commitment.

Membership of the network is free of charge with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) clarifying the network's purpose, consistent values, aims, criteria, conduct and direction.

The target is for the network to recruit 75 eligible members by the end of its first year. It will host 4 network events per calendar year, themed to support the aims and values of the network and aligned with the objectives of the Tourism Strategy for East Devon.

Through their participation in the network, members should be closer to achieving or improving the pillars/foundation values on which the network is built (i.e. collaboration, quality, net zero/sustainability and accessibility) and this will be an indication of how successful the network is in bringing about positive change.

EastDevonly public facing communication campaigns

EDDC was successful in securing Welcome Back funding in order to support our retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism sector recover from the pandemic via a number of campaigns and activities, which ran between 2020 and mid-2022, led by Growth, Development and Prosperity Communications Officer.

Phase 1 was prioritised to benefit local retailers, encouraging residents to 'Stay Local and Shop Safe' after lockdown. While this campaign was running, planning commenced with local business involvement for Phase 2 Christmas retail campaign and Phase 3 destination campaign for day/overnight visits – both using the EastDevonly brand.

EastDevonly highlighted all East Devon can offer, increasing the desire to visit in a national audience by showcasing the extremes of experiences. EastDevonly launched with a newly-created hub (eastdevonly.co.uk) supported by digital and social media.

A multi-channel approach communicated with all stakeholders at multiple touchpoints. Using local video and imagery, a range of businesses became case studies representing key high street locations.

Embraced by stakeholders as an online and offline hashtag campaign, EastDevonly gave power to businesses who could easily share, tag and post messages, using campaign toolkits with a guide for businesses on capturing content.

Three key ambassadors, Steph Bridge, Clare Mackenny and Michael Caines represented adventure, family and food/drink, respectively. They featured in themed films to create a digital advertising campaign which influenced core audiences in a data-driven manner across digital display and mobile within a 3-hour reach of East Devon.

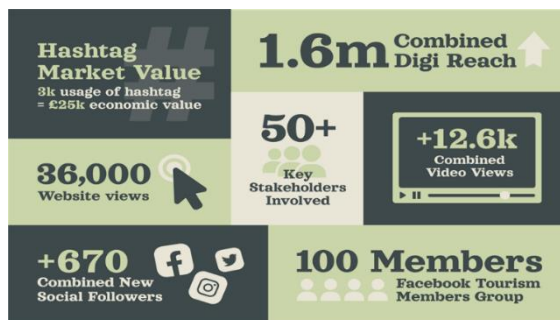
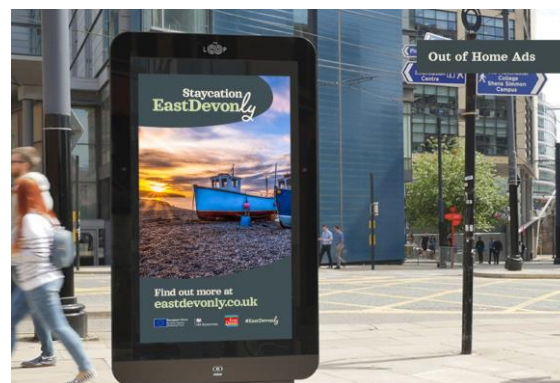
By the end of the campaign, evaluation showed the following outcomes:

- 50+ key local stakeholders involved

- combined social media reach of 1.6m people
- market value of 3,000 hashtag usages equated to £25k economic benefit
- 36,000 website views – incredible for a new website in such a short period of time
- strong engagement and positive feedback from residents and local businesses
- Local MPs, councillors and businesses cited the benefits of collective promotion.
- EastDevonly has been hugely important to our local economy at a crucial time. It proved businesses joining together could achieve a greater impact, setting a precedent for the future business collaboration which went on to underpin our East Devon Tourism Strategy

Impacts & Imagery:





EastDevonly brand was also used to encourage and promote 'Shop Local' Christmas campaign in December 2022.

'Coast meets Country' IRF funded project.

Through its Innovation and Resilience Fund, EDDC is supporting a £146,209 tourism focused project, being delivered through collaboration between Sidmouth, Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Seaton and Budleigh Salterton town councils.

The 'Coast meets Country' project will (1) significantly improve online reach and recognition of the partner towns, producing a cohesive destination profile encouraging visitors to move around East Devon; (2) provide a platform through which local tourism and hospitality businesses can market and sell their services to a global audience all year round; and (3) nurture and grow responsible tourism in the five towns and across East Devon.

Funding was awarded in June 2022 with project delivery expected within an 18 month timeframe.

The project has recently completed a branding exercise for the towns, part of this project and created the following high quality promotional videos:

Budleigh Salterton: <https://www.visitdevon.co.uk/sidmouth/budleigh-salterton>

Honiton: <https://www.visitdevon.co.uk/sidmouth/honiton>

Ottery St Mary: <https://www.visitdevon.co.uk/sidmouth/ottery-st-mary>

Seaton: <https://www.visitdevon.co.uk/sidmouth/seaton>

The project also involves developing a sustainable stewardship model for Sidmouth including: training/mentoring local businesses; identifying, setting and achieving sustainability goals; and producing destination-level Glasgow Declaration aligned Carbon Action Plan.

Learnings and outcomes from the sustainable stewardship pilot are to inform further UKSPF funded activities in support of the tourism sector in the third year of funding. Assuming the pilot is successful, funding could be used to replicate and extend the delivery of the pilot across the wider East Devon geography.

The UKSPF Sustainable Tourism Fund

At the end of 2022, EDDC received approval of its Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which has a dedicated Sustainable Tourism Fund to bring forward a range of projects to increase the sustainability and accessibility of our tourism sector.

The package of support will initially include small grants for tourism SMEs to help them develop better sustainability/green/accessibility practices and reduce their carbon footprint. Funding can be used to aid installation of EV charging points, purchase of electric bikes, installation of ramps, improve accessibility signage, etc.

The scheme will allow businesses to apply for green infrastructure/equipment to enable them to improve their sustainability offer. A 50% match-funding requirement will be established to ensure public support is matched with private sector investment.

As mentioned above the sustainable tourism stewardship pilot for Sidmouth comes to an end in Dec 2023, and its outcomes will inform future support via UKSPF.

A smaller part of our UKSPF allocation can be established to help promote East Devon as a sustainable destination, where this does not duplicate existing provision.

In addition, the Rural England Prosperity Fund will unlock further support to the tourism sector and community organisations working in that field. It will provide grant funding to new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams. It will also support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and visitors.

Local Plan and Sustainable Tourism Policy

Within the Local Plan, tourism is recognised as a key part of East Devon's economy. It is important that visitors continue to be drawn by the unique environment as well as high quality accommodation and services which meet their needs and encourage longer stays.

Working closely with EDDC's Planning Policy team, Economic Development officers have made significant progress in ensuring best use of the approved tourism strategy to inform and shape the wider local policy agenda in promoting strategic and value driven sector development. Their work has resulted in a draft Sustainable Tourism Policy now featured within the draft Local Plan.

The Sustainable Tourism Policy promotes a high quality, sustainable tourism experience for the wide range of visitors to East Devon. Further, it seeks to ensure that development proposals benefit local communities and businesses, whilst conserving, enhancing and promoting the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the District.

Applications which demonstrate consistency with the quality provision, sustainable and accessible, appropriately located accommodation, visitor facilities and attractions are more effectively encouraged. In this way, the values of the tourism strategy are reflected in policy and the development of a year-round visitor economy is facilitated.

Geri Panteva.

The Events Team.

A good example of the impact of the Culture, Sport, Leisure and Tourism portfolio on the economy of the district comes from the work of the Events Team, which operates within StreetScene. As you will be aware Streetscene is not within my portfolio, but the Events Team are.

The table below shows that the number of events that occur on EDDC land decreases sharply in the east of the district

Location, done per event	Total
Beer	1
Budleigh	6
Exmouth There were 18 events on the beach, with an additional 10 on beach gardens.	84
Honiton	6
Seaton	9
Sidmouth	24
Ottery St Mary	4
Total	134

Please note that these events are varied in type but certainly cover the areas of Culture, Sport, Leisure and Tourism from April 2021 to March 2022

Weddings.

Changes in the law have encouraged a more flexible approach towards wedding ceremonies. It will come as no surprise to members that Connaught Gardens, Sidmouth, is a popular choice for a wedding ceremony with a reception at another venue. Despite some early opposition to the use of Connaught gardens for wedding receptions, below is a condensed report (with personal details removed) showing

how a wedding ceremony takes place within Connaught Gardens in a manner which not only showcases the wedding party to great effect but also permits continued public access.

Background

Following on from recruiting an Events Officer, it was decided we would licence Connaught Gardens for weddings and receptions. Connaught Gardens became legally licenced for weddings in February 2021. As part of the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, guidance for weddings was changed multiple times. You can now legally get married outdoors, without a temporary structure. This has given us more locations in Connaught Gardens to hold ceremonies.

Our in house Graphic Designer produced a brochure for us to advertise weddings, this was used on our website and we paid to advertise on 'Hitched'. Once we started advertising the weddings, we received some negative feedback in regards to holding receptions in the gardens. This came from a variety of stakeholders including local residents and Councillors. It was then decided to postpone holding weddings and receptions in Connaught Gardens. We already had one ceremony booked for August 2021, so it was agreed this wedding could go ahead as a trial.

Initial Concerns

There were concerns raised in a letter dated 25 March 2021 with regards to weddings at Connaught Gardens, of which we feel we have addressed during our wedding trial and subsequent weddings.

Many of the concerns tied to the lack of supervision for wedding parties, however two staff members from the Events team are present at all weddings and oversee the setup, running and clean-up after each event. We ensure the peace of the gardens is upheld and only allow acoustic music as accompaniment, make sure all litter is disposed of correctly and complete a site inspection at the end of each event, and supervise wedding guests to assure safety and respectful behaviour. A risk assessment is also completed for each wedding to protect the wedding party's safety.

Only wedding ceremonies are now held at Connaught Gardens. From setup to takedown, these events last approximately 4 hours, which has far less impact on the general public. As we do not permit the erection of marquees, weddings only happen across one day. We have continued to allow 6 weddings a year; in 2022 weddings have been booked in May, June and October, which avoids disrupting the main summer holiday season.

"X and Y" Wedding – August 2021

Our first wedding in Connaught Gardens took place in the Sunken Garden. Signs were put up 1 week before, to let members of the public know the Sunken Garden would be closed between 2- 5pm.

The Events Support Officer and Team Leader for Sidmouth were in attendance, to act as venue representatives. Duties included to move on the public and barrier off the area, check those entering were guests, welcome in the chair hire company, and help with set up, answer any last minute questions, greet the registrars and manage parking at the gardens.

We were able to barrier off the Sunken Garden, allowing members of the public to use the rest of the gardens freely. Many members of the public commented on how good the gardens looked. When we explained we were setting up for a wedding, lots of the public stayed in the gardens to see the bride, we had a lot of people come in to take photos as well. When the violinist started to play, a lot more people were drawn to the area, the public were more than happy to be told it was a wedding and the area was closed. We had no negative comments during the time.

During the ceremony, the Team Leader for Sidmouth stood behind the 'bus shelters' on the walkway around the back of the sunken garden, this was so we didn't get heads of people in the back of photos. Quite a few guests were late due to lack of parking, and not being able to find another car park, this prompted our idea that we need to make a guide to pass onto those who have booked weddings, on where local facilities are. The photographer also suggested more neutral barriers, so they blended in better.

The registrars and Hire Company were very impressed with the venue, the guests also couldn't believe how stunning it was. We received some great feedback from the happy couple and we made front page of the Sidmouth Herald.

"We can't honestly thank you and Alan enough. We had the best day ever of our lives and we will always be extremely grateful to you all. You made our day magical and emotional. The memories will last a life time."



Impacting local businesses

By hosting wedding ceremonies only at Connaught Gardens, we are positively impacting local businesses in Sidmouth and East Devon. Using Josie and Andrew's wedding as an example: they and their 80-100 guests stayed locally in hotels in Sidmouth the night before the wedding. They then booked their reception with a local hotel and ate and drank most of the day and evening. Some guests chose to stay at this hotel on the night of the wedding, spreading out the bookings across Sidmouth. These guests also had time before the wedding on the Saturday morning and many told us that they spent the morning shopping in Sidmouth and complimented the variety of small, local shops in the town.

Couples also use local event suppliers, including Cotts and South West Hire to decorate their venue.

X and Y also returned to Sidmouth on their anniversary and spent the day in Sidmouth celebrating, including having lunch at the Clock Tower Café.

Moving Forward

Following the success of three weddings in Connaught Gardens, we now want to build on this success by booking further weddings. We have secured bookings for two more weddings in 2023.

In order to do this, we wish to plan for the following:

- Relaunch of the wedding web pages on the EDDC website
- Advertising – The three websites below offer the best value and all appear on the first Google page when searching “wedding ceremony venues in Sidmouth”
 - **Guides for Brides:** Standard package - Includes a full-feature professional profile with 50 photos, videos, calendar, reviews and a link to your website. Listing in your own county and nationally. £14.50 / month or £145 / year (+VAT)
 - **Wed online:** Wedding directory standard listing: £200 per year. This includes a selection of images, text, web link and contact number, A mini site featuring links to your coverage on wedmagazine.co.uk
 - **Bridebook:** Unlimited photos, Direct Contact Details, Description of services, Links to Social Media, Pricing Information, Client reviews & testimonials, Supplier recommendations, Unlimited videos, Selection of products, Industry awards and features. Free account
- To attend wedding fayres to showcase Connaught as a wedding ceremony venue.
- Maintain 6 wedding ceremonies a year (max.) with the possibility of revising this in Winter 2023.
- Update our wedding brochure with newer pictures, remove those that indicate wedding receptions are allowed. Show all of the sites where you can get married, including approximate numbers each area can hold as well. This also needs to show wider inclusivity for couples, including LGBTQ+.
- Produce a guide for ‘once your wedding has been booked’.
- Purchase more neutral barriers

Caitlin Davey and Kate Yeo.

Culture and Leisure

Summary

The Council Plan 2021-23 section:

Promoting culture and community

- Develop a stronger commitment to and offers in arts and leisure through the development of a Culture Strategy and an Events Strategy for our own land.
- Encourage town and parish councils (and the third sector where appropriate) to protect and support their community spaces.
- Promote community wellbeing programmes through a culture and activities offer, led by the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Seaton Wetlands, Wild East Devon, and expand our community development activities.
- Promote the links between arts and culture and climate change through the Creative Cabin and other initiatives, raising awareness of the public and seeking to change behaviours.
- Support communities through the transfer of appropriate community assets to towns and villages, enabling local communities to own, manage and develop assets in support of community aspirations and benefits.

- The key challenges faced for 2023/24 reflect where we are now almost 12 months on from the lifting of restrictions and the shift of focus since March 2022 to enable a full recovery and “bounce back” of all our outdoor events and restoring customer/audience confidence in using our leisure and cultural centres once again.
- The recovery has been gradual with some sectors faring better than others with a return to near normality in audiences and income levels.
- To give Members a sense of what that looks like over the last 12 months.
 - The Manor Pavilion theatre alongside all theatres nationally is now showing a stronger recovery from 6 months ago with audience levels back to 70% of pre-pandemic times with a focus to achieve by 2023/24 90% audience and income recovery;
 - The THG has bounced back very strongly with income recovery at 80% of pre-pandemic levels and footfall at almost 100% of 2019 figures;
 - LED has had a mixed year with income recovery at around 80% of pre pandemic levels but a sluggish recovery in terms of membership however activities such as swimming and classes showing the strongest recovery.
- So it is fair to say that the leisure, hospitality and theatre sectors have found the journey of recovery to be slower than others but it is moving in the right direction which gives our leisure and cultural teams confidence for the year ahead;
- The uncertainties looking ahead are all around the growing cost of living generated through high inflation and energy costs which will undoubtedly manifest itself in our customers/audiences being much more cautious about how they will prioritise their spending in the year ahead;
- However, despite this the social value of our theatres, gallery and leisure centres were proven when during the lockdowns in 2020 & 2021 there was a recognition of the importance and value

that these cultural facilities provide for all our communities in terms of mental health and physical wellbeing.

1. Culture



Themes & Objectives (1)



Themes & Objectives (2)



- The adoption of East Devon's Cultural Strategy in 2022 has provided the strategic direction and ambitions of the Council for its cultural activities for the next 10 years and sets out its list of priorities through its Delivery Plan which for 2023/24 are:
 - Embedding the work of our new Cultural Producer, Sarah Elghady (appointed January 2023) across the work of programmes of many Service areas and delivering the Council's cultural activities and looking at how to enhance and secure funding for the Strategy's 10 yr Action Plan priorities
 - We have started the delivery of the 3 year UK SPF cultural programme which provides £100K of funding to support theme 1 of the Culture Strategy - 'The people that do' that will reach out to all our communities cultural & creative arts organisations and help improve their knowledge & skillsets through a targeted training programme.
 - This cultural programme will cover areas such as making a successful funding application, developing a marketing plan, developing an audience development plan also enable networking and collaborative working across the district.

A snapshot of culture in East Devon



- The UK SPF funding will also develop a digital platform for our ACED Network where we can provide an up to date directory of all our cultural providers and develop a "what's on" listing to share with the new Tourism Network platform being developed by EDDC's Economic Development team.

UK SPF cultural programme:

Aims:

- The programme of projects over the 3 year funding period delivers East Devon's Culture Strategy's theme on 'Strengthen and support the 'people-that-do'. It will specifically assist in creating cultural opportunities for some of East Devon's most socially deprived communities and those who have little or no access to cultural activities or events.
- East Devon has an ageing population, including the 3rd highest proportion of retired people in the UK. At the same time, health is generally high. By investing in community cultural activity through volunteering and community leadership, this project will enable many among this key demographic to stay active and continue to contribute to their communities.
- Overall, the population of East Devon has lower levels of cultural engagement than Devon as a whole.
- The project proposal will take forward **one of the 5 Key Themes in the Culture Strategy** that seeks to help provide support and additional resource into the volunteer network supporting much of the cultural activities in East Devon's communities;
- The current volunteer network is disparate and uncoordinated across the district with multiple challenges around receiving support for fund raising and accessing appropriate training to build capacity, the project proposal will help target resources through events, professional support and a single point of contact (volunteer portal) to provide capacity into this area;
- This project will pilot an infrastructure model for volunteer networking and capacity building, seeking to empower the volunteer base to grow in confidence, capacity and skill (rather than disempowering by doing everything for them)
- Audience development especially with young people is also a key challenge the project will seek to overcome and enable young people in the district to participate, engage and have a voice for their needs through the creation of a Youth Forum;
- East Devon has significantly fewer 20-29 year olds than Devon as a whole. While culture alone cannot solve this problem, the targeted support and opportunities within this project will help more young people to feel that they have a voice, something to do and potentially a role in their community.
- FEI's 2022 consultation revealed a strong community desire for more joined-up promotion and publicity. Some commented that there is 'little to no capacity' for marketing within volunteer organisations. This project will build skills in digital marketing and explore options for a joined-up model.
- The lack of single point of information through a digital 'what's on' guide that enables the diverse and numerous cultural activities being delivered within the district has meant that local people and visitors have been unable to access or even been aware of events. The project will seek to set up a digital 'what's on guide' to overcome this issue working in collaboration with tourism to create a destination portal;
- As a first step, this project will commission a community information systems mapping exercise and feasibility study. Using external expertise, this exercise will map the strengths and weaknesses of existing human and digital information systems in the community / VCSE sector against the various audiences for information, their needs and preferences. This will ensure that any digital

guide does not ‘reinvent the wheel’ while also allowing it to be shaped by proven audience / end-user need.

Culture Strategy theme 1 - Strengthen and support the ‘people-that-do’ :

Objective: Support the unique, community-led cultural organisations whose efforts enhance the high quality of life and wellbeing in East Devon’s towns and villages.

Actions	Potential work programmes	Timescale	Suggested lead at EDDC
1.1 Invest in and strengthen our many thriving, often volunteer-run cultural venues and programmes across East Devon	1.1.1 Build post-Covid confidence and capacity for volunteers and community groups in our towns and parishes through training in governance, business planning, digital transformation and fundraising, as well as training in core creative skills, such as producing live events, interpretation, collections management	Short/Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team, via UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) bid Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	1.1.2 Enhance the quality and appeal of collections, and the sustainability of local museums, through a programme of shared capital investment in display and interpretation	Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team (UK SPF bid) Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	1.1.3 Explore the potential of a new network that supports more community asset transfers and sharing of policy support and good practice for village halls and other cultural venues, to ensure their place at the heart of our communities	Med	Place, Assets & Commercialisation team Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
1.2 Support and champion volunteering	1.2.1 Celebrate East Devon's volunteers through recognition and rewards	Short	Growth, Development & Prosperity team (UK SPF bid) Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)
	1.2.2 Explore the potential for promoting and diversifying volunteering opportunities through a central portal, such as Volunteer Makers	Med	Growth, Development & Prosperity team (UK SPF bid) Supported by Cultural Producer (recruitment permitting)

- The directory of the district’s cultural organisations will enable an on line portal for sharing information and networking;
- We are currently developing the terms of reference and membership (following Arts Council best practice guidance) for setting up an East Devon Cultural Compact that will help steer and provide cultural sector professional support to the Cultural Producer to develop funding bids for cultural activities e.g. cultural tourism, place-making schemes & cultural community leadership;

- Crucially it synergises with the Leisure Strategy and the Tourism Strategy being developed by Andy Wood's team.

EDDC arts development

- EDDC's creative arts & performing arts "bounce back" work continues to help restore confidence in our theatre and gallery from the 2 years of lockdowns & achieve pre-pandemic audience levels and confidence in using these important venues. Highlights this year include:
 - The THG has been awarded by Arts Council England a £26,015 National Lottery Project Grant to support the delivery of their Young People, Inclusivity Arts & Environment programme.
 - The 'Young people inclusivity, Arts and Environment' project provides new dynamic and inclusive opportunities to engage with arts, culture and climate, responding to the needs of East Devon's young people aged 7yrs-25yrs developed through partnerships led by Thelma Hulbert Gallery(THG) across Honiton and East Devon.
 - The THG's 'Young People, Inclusivity, Arts & Environment (YPIA&E)' grows out of the work with the TATE, University of Exeter, The Inclusion Agency, East Devon and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships and East Devon District Council which revealed the need for a targeted young people programme.
 - The programme will enable young people and their networks to participate in culture and creativity where they live, to co-create and find career pathways. It establishes a formal partnership between THG, schools, Higher Education, nature conservation and community networks.
 - The project comprises a new Youth Network, Engagement Coordinator student intern, YP-produced off-site projects and exhibitions, YP-led digital resources, events and workshops. It will transform THG's engagement programme and strengthen relationships to East Devon communities
 - THG continued to manage the Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) Network and delivered 3 ACED Network meetings in 2022
 - ACED now has 400 members signed up representing the creative arts and cultural sector in East Devon and serves the communities of East Devon providing a central platform to engage, network, promote and talk about arts and culture across the region. The membership has grown steadily in 2022 and has delivered networking and training events
 - The Manor Pavilion Theatre was the first theatre in Devon to reopen post Covid with a full programme of performances for 2022 and despite ongoing anxieties from some of its core audience over Covid the theatre was able to open its doors and make it a safe environment for audiences and performers alike reaffirming its importance in the local community as a cultural destination.
 - The theatre reactivated the full 3 month and 12 play Summer Season with West End producer Paul Taylor Mill and achieved a 70% recovery of ticket sales and audience numbers on pre-pandemic 2019 figures (up from 50% audience/ticket sales recovery in 2021)
 - Finally, we continued to support a range of other cultural partnerships that serve the whole of East Devon – Villages In Action that helps bring a wide range of creative performances (dance, music etc.) through a touring programme into our rural communities. This has accessibility and inclusion at its heart and ensures that our rural communities can enjoy performance-based art in their village halls or local pubs without having to go to their nearest town. It is a vital cultural outreach programme that helps sustain a vibrant all year round cultural offer in East Devon.
 - Likewise, our modest annual support of the SW Museums Partnership has provided invaluable funding and training to all our local museums and continues to help them remain financially sustainable and crucially support the volunteers who help run the museums.

2. Leisure



East Devon
District Council

Leisure Strategy
2021-2031

A report by Strategic Leisure Limited
June 2022

- The adoption of EDDC's Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy 2021-31 in 2022 has now provided the LED Monitoring Forum a focus for overseeing the Action Plan and a framework for reviewing EDDC's relationship with LED.

Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance (SOPG) Diagnostic

- To inform the Leisure Strategy we followed in 2022 Sport England's best practice guidance.
- The purpose of the SOPG Diagnostic was to provide a position statement for East Devon DC to illustrate where we are in the process of thinking about and planning for physical activity and leisure provision over the next 5-10 years.
- This work was carried out as the first stage of the Strategy development process and the report was considered and approved by Cabinet and Full Council in 2021/22.

The SOPG Diagnostic has:

- Provided an overview of the District:
- Headline demographic, health and socio economic review of the district
- Reviewed any existing needs assessment/supply/demand surveys
- Reviewed existing participation and activity levels and trends; where the gaps are, who is inactive, where and why?
- Reviewed local and regional strategies and policies specifically relating to health and wellbeing, plus corporate plan and local plan (and any specific housing development proposals that may impact future demand)

- Identified local priorities and why these are important- what does East Devon DC want to achieve through the provision of physical activity and leisure and why?
- Identified the Shared Outcomes to be achieved in relation to health and well-being
- Identified gaps in existing evidence base
- Described what East Devon DC currently provides, where and how
- Site visits of all Council facilities including dual use sites (Subject to Covid restrictions)
- Mapped all facilities by type and location.
- Reviewed the community outreach service.
- Reviewed the current arrangements with Leisure East Devon (LED) and what that delivers in terms of throughput and social value and the current cost of the service.
- Reviewed each facility in relation to key strategic factors: meeting local need; community capacity; usage; whether adjacent/competition with other provision; financial (cost, investment, income generation); building condition; catchment areas; key users e.g. schools for curriculum delivery; dual use management arrangements/operating hours etc.
- Run the Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) to assess indicative future need.
- Undertaken a Stakeholder consultation – engaged with identified key strategic stakeholders to get their views on the challenge and opportunities for East Devon DC in terms of physical activity and leisure provision.
- Assessed where East Devon DC is now in terms of provision compared to need and opportunities and where it is compared to the SOPG process; this will identify key elements of work that are needed to underpin a future strategic approach to provision and delivery.

Leisure Strategy Action Plan priorities

- The Action Plan is for a 10 year period and it has listed the following as priority 1 actions that the LED Monitoring Forum will need to discuss to agree which are seen as the most urgent in terms of Officers progressing this financial year and into 2023/24. These actions in the table below are not ranked in priority order rather taken as listed in the Leisure Strategy Action Plan. It will be for the Forum to agree the order in which they should be tackled following discussion.

KEY ACTIONS	Priority	Completion	Who leads	Resources needed
EDDC to revisit all stock condition survey data and associated costs within the context of the recommendations from the strategy and the need to retain and invest in its existing portfolio of leisure facilities (priority facilities are Exmouth, Honiton, Axminster). Agree a 5 – 10 year planned preventative maintenance programme of works – capital and revenue.	1	2022/23	EDDC Asset Management Team	Internal EDDC officer time
EDDC to undertake a site options appraisal to address identified shortfall in leisure facility provision highlighted within the Leisure Strategy. The priority focus should be on: • Cranbrook – 6 lane 25m pool, health and fitness, 4 court sports hall, 2 studios (small pool/Leisure Local as a minimum), to ideally	1	2023/24	EDDC Planning Team EDDC Leisure Team Devon County Council Exeter City	Internal EDDC officer time. External consultants for Cranbrook business case – circa £50k.

<p>align to development of Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exmouth - ATP • Honiton - ATP • Axminster – Netball Courts <p>Consideration should be given to new and existing sites and include an integrated offer of new leisure centre(s) provision and separate arrangements for individual sports/activities, working with partner organisations in the community.</p>			<p>Council</p> <p>Local Delivery Pilot</p> <p>Relevant schools and sports clubs</p> <p>NGBs</p>	
<p>The refurbishment of Colyton ATP to be undertaken as a priority during Summer 2022 and for Exmouth ATP to be completed by Autumn 2023 and for these works to be reflected in the Council's capital strategy.</p>	1	2023/24	<p>EDDC Asset Management Team</p> <p>EDDC Leisure Team</p> <p>LED</p> <p>Colyton Grammar School</p>	<p>Internal EDDC officer time</p> <p>LED</p> <p>External contractors</p>
<p>EDDC to renegotiate all existing dual use facility agreements, in favour of the Council to increase access and value for the East Devon Community. Daytime access is the priority to achieve. Following re-negotiation daytime programmes to be developed focussing on older people.</p>	1	2024/25	<p>EDDC Legal Services</p> <p>EDDC Leisure Team</p> <p>LED</p> <p>Devon County Council</p> <p>Schools and Board of Governors</p>	<p>Internal EDDC officer time</p> <p>LED</p> <p>External contractors</p> <p>Internal EDDC officer time - leisure, legal*, asset management</p> <p>Devon County Council Relevant Schools External leisure consultants? Circa £5k</p> <p>*Additional dedicated legal resources required</p>
<p>EDDC to renegotiate and possibly extend the terms of the existing contract with LED. As a minimum, the following principles should be incorporated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED to submit business plan through to end of contract period which will present year 1 baseline breakdown of all income and expenditure (Profit and Loss 	1	2022/23	<p>EDDC Leisure Team</p> <p>LED</p>	<p>Internal EDDC officer time</p> <p>External consultants - circa £5k</p>

<p>Account) for each site including the health and wellbeing programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business plan will provide the equivalent information for each year through to the end of the contract period, showing the management fee payable by the Council to the operator, increased by RPI annually. • The business plan will clearly show the management fee payment allocated to each site P and L account. • This management fee will replace the existing 5 year fixed service fee. • In re-basing the contract, EDDC should consider the introduction of: (1) a utility benchmarking procedure to be applied at a frequency to be determined. Whilst the utility tariff rate should be shared between Council and LED, the risk associated with increased energy consumption should remain the responsibility of the operator. (2) Pandemic cover, ensuring that LED will be in a 'no better, no worse' financial position, but any payments will not be unrestricted and will follow an 'open book' policy. 				
<p>Any revised contract should clearly set out EDDC's key principles and outcomes for sport, health and physical activity and establish key performance indicators (KPIs) against which the contractor will be monitored e.g. participation targets for under-represented groups, levels/frequency of participation measured against Sport England Active Lives annual data returns, East Devon Public Health priorities etc.</p>	1	2022/23	EDDC Leisure Team	<p>Internal EDDC officer time</p> <p>External consultants</p>

- A financial appraisal of the anticipated post Covid annual management fee costs were presented to Joint Overview & Scrutiny budget meeting. The recognition that the leisure industry is still undergoing a period of recovery with its membership as well as facing the challenges of energy price increases etc.
- We have started the negotiations with LED which will need to consider the budgetary challenges EDDC faces in its MTFP and the level at which LED can be supported to ensure we continue to provide our residents access to our leisure sites.
- We have started renegotiating our dual use site agreements to enable significant financial savings to our building maintenance costs – Colyton GS has been the first school to have these discussions and we have just started a discussion with Honiton Community College on their sports facilities.

- Actions that have been identified in 2022/23 also include how EDDC's Surveyors can carry out a stock condition survey of leisure centres to have a strategic understanding of the costs required to maintain our leisure buildings over the next 5-10 years – this will require a new budget for 2023/24 to enact.
- The identification of how to provide leisure facilities within Cranbrook as part of the town centre master planning and delivery work being led by Andy Wood's team has also commenced with a consultant appointed to lead the master plan work and develop proposals for a leisure hub for the town that includes a swimming pool, fitness and cycling studio as well other commercial leisure elements to help offset the running costs.
- Implementing energy saving schemes prioritising our swimming pools e.g. air source heat pumps has been identified as key elements of our capital programme investment in 2023/24 for our leisure sites and LED and EDDC are currently working a priority 123 list for sites to implement over the coming months and years.
- The delivery of the 3 year England Rural Prosperity leisure and capital fund programme launching in April 2023 will provide capital grants to leisure and cultural assets to improve energy efficiencies and providing leisure outreach activities into our communities. This will help our independently run community leisure and cultural buildings improve their energy efficiency and go a long way to helping make them more financially viable in the long term.

Charlie Plowden.

Sport.

I am referencing this as a separate item, mainly as the playing pitch strategy has been delayed for confidential reasons. However, I have been in contact with the Devon FA and other local sporting clubs when necessary to provide help and support as best I can.

Summary.

The above report provides a comprehensive overview of the work of this portfolio. I hope members will agree that significant progress has been made over the past two years to implement the strategies that have been introduced. The report also shows how willing and effective officers have been to work across service areas to make the work of this portfolio possible. While significant challenges relating to the impact of the pandemic still exist, there are signs of a gradual improvement in the confidence of residents and visitors to use and enjoy the activities and events which are already in place or are planned for this year. A recent ACED network meeting showed not only the effectiveness of networking within the cultural strategy but also the subsequent enthusiasm and commitment that this is generating. Such work will have a significant effect not only upon such cultural activities but also aid the operation of the East Devon Tourism Network. This report also clearly shows that as a district we are fortunate in having effective and well managed leisure provision which continues to meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities. Despite financial pressures, leisure provision, of all types, in East Devon has a hugely beneficial impact upon the health and wellbeing of residents and sets the framework for a healthy, happy and successful life.

Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks to all officers who have contributed to facilitate the work of this portfolio, with special thanks going to Charlie Plowden, Andy Wood, Ruth Gooding, Geri Panteva, Rob Murray, Sarah Elghady and the team at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.