

**Oversight and Governance**

Chief Executive's Department
Plymouth City Council
Ballard House
Plymouth PL1 3BJ

Please ask for Hannah Chandler-Whiting
T 01752 305155

E democraticservices@plymouth.gov.uk

www.plymouth.gov.uk

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NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 4 February 2026

2.00 pm

Council House, Plymouth

Members:

Councillor Ricketts, Chair

Councillor Holloway, Vice Chair

Councillors Allen, Bannerman, Darcy, Goslin, McCarty, McLay, Raynsford, M.Smith and Sproston.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

This meeting will be webcast and available on-line after the meeting. By entering the meeting room, Councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

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Tracey Lee

Chief Executive

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

3. Chair's Urgent Business

To receive reports on business which in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 4. Plymouth Sound National Marine Park - Annual Update: | (Pages 1 - 26) |
| 5. Plymouth Economic Strategy: Civic Pride & Regeneration Pillar Update: | (Pages 27 - 50) |
| 6. Visitor Plan/Culture Plan Annual Update: | (Pages 51 - 92) |
| 7. Work Programme: | (Pages 93 - 98) |
| 8. Action Log: | (Pages 99 - 102) |

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	04 February 2026
Title of Report:	Plymouth Sound National Marine Park – Annual Update
Lead Member:	Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Leader)
Lead Strategic Director:	Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)
Author:	Kat Deeney (Head of Natural Environment Service)
Contact Email:	Kathryn.deeney@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	260204 NMP Scrutiny Update 2026 CR FINAL
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The last update to the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee was in December 2024. The project has now completed the second full year of delivery and has made great progress across all of the elements within the programme. Importantly work has enabled a better drawing together different elements of the project with more focus on enabling impactful engagement. The initial year of the project was a year of firsts. The second has seen development across all areas and as we look forward to year three plans are in place to deepen the breadth and depth of impact of the project as well as starting to develop the legacy for the Horizons investment, supported by the NMP CIO.

This report provides an update on all aspects of the PSNMP Horizons project and a look forward to plan for 2026.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. It is recommended that the committee note the PSNMP update and support the ongoing delivery as set out in the report.

Reason: The Horizons project is progressing well against its ambitions, and the Park's development and the projects legacy work is well underway. Support for both the project and the legacy work is still required.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The ongoing work of the PSNMP Horizons project and the development of the Park could not receive support in its ongoing delivery. This was discounted as the PSNMP is a key strategic priority for the Council.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The National Marine Park Horizons project, support by the significant investment received from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, will deliver the City ambition to unlock the transformational ‘big idea’ of delivering the UK’s first National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound. The delivery of the NMP in Plymouth will provide inspiration for a new generation of Parks. This project will deliver a vital change by working with and alongside communities to enable a long-lasting change that benefits people and nature in a manner that is sustained for decades to come.

The programme will deliver against policies within the Plymouth Plan including policy ‘INT1 - Implementing Britain’s Ocean City’. The NMP has been designed to support the City Vision as well as Plymouth City Council priorities: ‘unlocking the City’s potential’ by making more of one of our greatest assets. As a result of the focus on engagement and inclusion it will also support the priorities within ‘Caring for People and Communities’. Particularly reducing health inequalities, by providing more opportunities for a wider group of people to access the health and wellbeing benefits the NMP can offer.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The implications for the PSNMP Horizons project were set out in the Business Case submitted and approved in March 2024. Additional funding to support the project has also been the reviewed through approved business cases. This report does not result in any new implications for the medium term financial plan.

Financial Risks

This report is an update on the NMP project and therefore does not identify any new financial risks.

Legal Implications

This report is an update on the NMP project and therefore does not identify any new legal implications.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The PSNMP work has a core focus on the improvement of the environment directly through the nature boost programme and through all aspects of the project as a result of the key focus on developing a new positive relationship between people and the ocean

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

There are no new implications raised as a result of the update in this report.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	260204 NMP Scrutiny Update 2026							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 26/01/2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Tudor Evans OBE approved via email											
Date approved: 27/01/2026											

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PLYMOUTH SOUND NATIONAL MARINE PARK – UPDATE REPORT FEBRUARY 2026



Executive Summary

The last report to the Natural Environment and Growth Scrutiny Committee was in December 2024 and provided an update on the award of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) support and the start of delivery for the Horizons programme. Over 2025 the programme accelerated across all workstreams—team development, Nature Boost, capital restoration at our Gateways, activity plan delivery, Digital Park, and Evaluation—while the long-term park entity progressed through Project Sunfish to secure a sustainable legacy.

Over the last year there has been significant activity happen across many areas of the Park which will be detailed in this report including:

- **Team development** – recruitment completed across core delivery, with additional capacity added over the summer and specialist Inclusion and Evaluation support commissioned.
- **Nature Boost** – successful continuation of the spotted rays project (featured on BBC Countryfile) and development of seahorse and native oyster work; launch preparations for the two-year "Stay Salty" nature campaign; continued development of seagrass (marine habitat) tokens.
- **Heritage restoration and repurposing** – Tinside Lido main works completed with snagging and final account in hand; Mount Batten Centre and Tower plateau under construction; Mount Batten Pontoon contractor appointed with completion programmed for 2026; Garden Battery shutters installed and main works procurement progressing.
- **Activity Plan** – thousands engaged through Meet the Marine Park, community anchor points at Firestone Bay and Ernesettle, coastal cleans and citizen science; Sea in Our School (SIOS) delivered benchmarking and visits for 37 classes in the autumn term; Seafest 2025 delivered across sites despite severe weather impacts (c. 12,000 visitors).
- **Digital Park** – "Sea for Yourself" progressed: Commission 1 (David Cotterrell) and Commission 2 (artist duo selected) moving into delivery; Artist Residencies active (including 'Let's SEA Your Tatts' and '...and breathe'); new website in build for 2026; CRM upgraded to support engagement.
- **Evaluation** – risk and wellbeing monitoring embedded; behaviour-change pathway (Marine Citizenship) refined; illustrative park map completed; inclusive practice strengthened with Improving Lives Plymouth as inclusion consultant.
- **Volunteer programme** – The volunteer programme has expanded significantly in 2025, supported by the rollout of Rosterfy and a 250% increase in volunteer recruitment. New initiatives, including Volunteer Plus and enhanced wellbeing and training opportunities, have improved accessibility and volunteer confidence. Monthly social events and knowledge-building sessions have strengthened skills, cohesion, and partnerships. The programme has also broadened its reach to priority audiences, with strong representation from diverse communities.

People remain at the heart of Horizons. Across 2025 we enabled more—and more diverse—participants to get in, on, under and beside the National Marine Park, while improving environmental outcomes, strengthening heritage assets, and building the long-term entity to sustain the UK's first National Marine Park.

Throughout 2025 within the Horizons project, we have;

- Engaged with 37 school classes across Plymouth, connecting to 970 students to Plymouth Sound National Marine Park through the Sea in our School programme
- Recorded 12,156 hours of volunteer time spent across the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park
- Brought the National Marine Park to 4,308 individuals with Meet The Marine Park, across a wide range of community events, collecting valuable data on public knowledge, perceptions, suggestions, and barriers to accessing PSNMP.
- Enabled over 350 people onto the water through tailored activation at the Mount Batten Centre.
- Successfully engaged 2,043 participants across a diverse programme of events with Plymouth Active Leisure at Tinside Lido. With Swim Safe accounting for 102 of these participants, the strongest programme being Tinside Youth Night with 1,353 participants.
- Increased our social media connections with a net audience growth of 4,219, attracting +4million impressions with +142,000 engagements. With an additional +462,000 views across reels and TikTok.
- Engaged with more residents digitally through our website generating 58,200 views (a 6.4% increase from 2024) with a total user value of 20,500, 20,300 of these being new users.



It has been a year ramping up activity and learning and adapting the programme so it responds to the needs of our communities. This report provides a more detailed update on all the points above and an insight into the 2025 work programme.

I. Nature Boost

The Nature Boost programme is looking to deliver a transformative project for people, place and planet. We are focusing on key species and habitats found in Plymouth Sound and looking at awareness raising and piloting new interventions to restore the nature of the Sound. It fits into the NMP behavioural change programme by providing an inspiring and engaging focus on nature that enables people to learn about the nature and get involved in programmes to help enhance it. Key species for us in 2025 were a successful rays and skates programme detailed below and work on developing resources for seahorses and the Allis shad.

Species Boost

At the start of the year we delivered, with key project partners (the Marine Biological Association (MBA), The Shark Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust) an ambitious programme to hatch out rays and skates. The eggs were laid at the MBA Research Aquarium. The Rays were then grown on in tanks before being released back into Plymouth Sound from the MBA research vessel, Sepia. The release and work at the research aquarium were filmed by BBC Countryfile (6 million audience) along with a citizen science ‘Great Egg Case Hunt’ at Wembury Beach with partners. Media coverage and reach (Q2 of 2025) are given below:

OTV - 5,863

Western Morning News

Rays of hope as young fish raised and released

By Emma Jones

Local fish are being released into Plymouth Sound as part of a project to raise awareness of the marine life around the South West. The project, called 'Rays of Hope', is a partnership between Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and the Marine Biological Association (MBA).

Fifteen young spotted rays have been released into Plymouth Sound as part of a project to raise awareness of the marine life around the South West. The fish were bred in captivity as part of the Little Rays of Hope project, a partnership between Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and the Marine Biological Association (MBA).

Ally Harvey, aquarium manager at the MBA, said it was impossible to conserve species and protect the coastline without projects which encouraged others to learn more about specific sea creatures.

Ms Harvey said spotted rays had unique markings "like a fingerprint" and the released fish had been photographed so the MBA team could track them.

Elaine Hayes, chief executive of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, said the aim of the project was to "boost nature, reconnect people to their environment, and get them to advocate for nature and look after it better".


She said one of the ways of doing this was to continue to monitor the progress of the rays, whose progress had been reported from eggs to six-month-old pups.

Ms Harvey said she hoped divers would be able to capture the fish on underwater cameras.

She said "I really do hope we get some footage of them, it would be absolutely fantastic."

OTV - 200,000

BBC SPOTLIGHT



OTV - 7,500

FishFocus

AQUACULTURE / CATCHING / PROCESSING

BBC COUNTRYFILE CAPTURES MOMENT OF CONNECTION AS YOUNG RAYS ARE RELEASED INTO PLYMOUTH SOUND

BBC Countryfile captures moment of connection as young rays are released into Plymouth Sound

The event marks a key moment in the 'Little Rays of Hope project' - a collaborative venture from the Marine Biological Association (MBA) and Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, supported through the Nature Deal Programme and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.


The video footage of the project aims to provide expert advice for local people to engage with these species, to learn about them and to explore the possibility of using their own patterns for identification, when across the need for tagging.

During the filming, Nick Hayes joined BBC Countryfile at the MBA, and the Aquarium team shared the 4000+ eggs in the released young spotted rays (they met at the National Marine Park). These rays had been raised in the MBA's aquarium, offering a new chance for people to see the species up close and learn more about their lives - from eggs to pup - in a carefully monitored environment.

OTV - 25,000,000

BBC NEWS

Baby rays bred in captivity released into the sea



The spotted rays have been raised in captivity for the last six months

Fifteen young spotted rays have been released into Plymouth Sound as part of a project to raise awareness of the marine life around the South West.

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OTV - 944,000

BBC RADIO Devon

19 April Plymouth Sound National Marine Park is the first of its kind in the UK. John Craven explores the Wembury coastline's remarkable aquatic habitat, just as the waters start to warm and the marine park carries out a coordinated release of spotted rays.



OTV - 20,606

BBC COUNTRYFILE MAGAZINE

*Coverage for the PSNMP Little Rays of Hope project			
	PR Audience Opportunity to View	PR AVE Overall in GBP	Number of pieces achieved
Coverage Total	32,177,969	2,376,750	7

Developing into 2026 the National Marine Park Horizons Project will be working on a Seahorse programme scoped with experts. Early in the year the PSNMP connected 30 experts in the field for a one-day workshop to share ideas and knowledge. The day generated several innovative ideas we are looking to promote within Plymouth Sound.

Additionally in 2026 we are looking to develop the species boost programme by working with the University of Plymouth on an animated film using the Allis shad’s amazing journey from the Eddystone to fresh water to lay their eggs. The Allis Shad is a very rare fish species that is found within the NMP. The project is currently in the design phase.

Habitat Boost

The Nature programme commissioned studies on biogenic reefs and mudflats in Plymouth Sound. These reports, commissioned from the University of Plymouth, considered the historical coverage and potential enhancement of these important habitats. We are developing proposals for native oysters and mudflat interpretation.

As part of the mudflat engagement programme, work has begun on developing a simple Wader Watch survey to raise awareness of the importance of mudflats across the Sound as they support amongst other things an abundance of bird life. We are developing the Wonderful Wader Watch, bringing together local experts and community groups to develop the project and determine the best approach. The Ranger Team have received bird ID training and are leading ‘wader walks’ at Ernesettle Creek. We are also undertaking a biodiversity survey at Ernesettle with ideas for saltmarsh. This work focuses on identifying and enhancing the habitats that support our iconic species and explores how key habitats can be boosted through restoration programmes, landscape improvements and community engagement.

Seagrass Tokens

This element of the project is developing a new way to fund marine habitat restoration in Plymouth Sound which could eventually be replicated across the UK. The approach uses “Seascape Tokens,” where each token represents a small 3m x 3m area of seabed. Businesses and organisations can buy tokens to fund restoration work such as seagrass planting, maintenance, monitoring, and research. The first pilot site is at Jennycliff Bay. The aim is to create a simple, transparent method for

supporters to see what they are funding and what environmental benefits it delivers, including carbon storage, improved biodiversity, and healthier coastal ecosystems.

This token model is a stepping stone towards wider national marine nature markets. Over time, it could expand to other important habitats such as kelp forests, mudflats, oyster reefs, and biogenic reefs. Alongside this, partners are investigating building a “Seascape Platform” to show restoration opportunities in a clear map-based format and make it easier for responsible funders to invest in UK marine recovery. The project seeks to attract new, mission-aligned investment, support long-term environmental management, and strengthen Plymouth’s role as a leader in marine restoration and the UK’s first National Marine Park.

Over the last year the project has been developing the Seagrass donation token model refined into clear system work-packages with partners; with the concept presented at national fora (e.g., UK Seagrass Symposium) with positive engagement from Crown Estate and Duchy of Cornwall. The plan is to plant the first area that could attract investor interest in 2026.

Strategic Mitigation Plan (SMP)

The SMP is a requirement for the Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the project and has an agreed series of mitigation and monitoring measures including all parts of the project (from Capital work building controls, ecological surveys, marine communities). The SMP has been analysed and included in work programmes. The SMP for the National Marine Park complements existing HRA requirements for Plymouth Sound and we are looking at common delivery across PCC and working with Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF). The progress on the SMP is reported to the Programme Board and Horizons Board with an annual summary submitted in December 2025.

Nature Campaign

Working with Leap Media Ltd we will be launching the Nature Campaign, Stay Salty in April 2026. The campaign is a key part of the behaviour change strategy for the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and looks to highlight and challenge the relationship the people of Plymouth have with their amazing natural heritage on their doorstep and promote ways to become involved. The campaign will provide toolkits for the team, partners and collaborators to spread the Stay Salty message.

2. Capital Restoration and Repurposing

Capital works remain fundamental to inclusive access and activation of PSNMP Gateways.

Front-loaded delivery in 2025 ensured momentum across all three anchor sites:

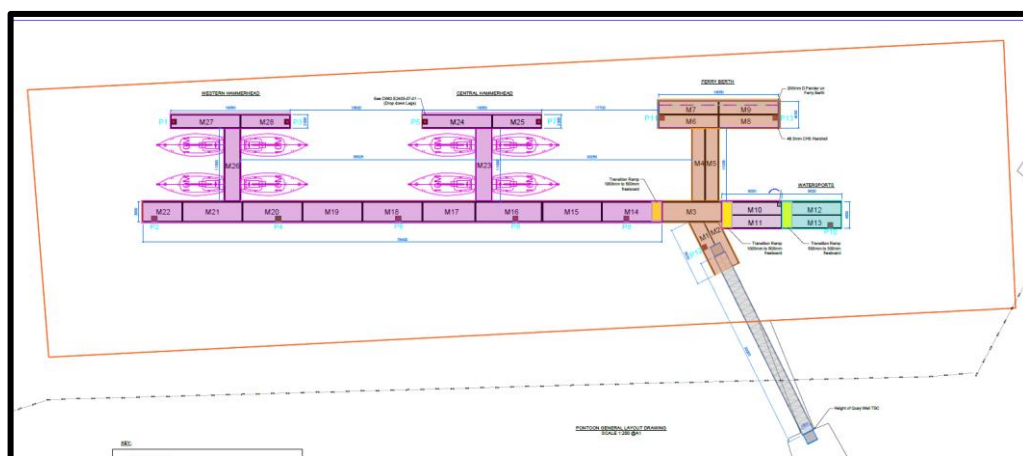
Tinside Lido – The Tinside capital works completed in 2025, opening new spaces for young people and the community. It has brought the first floor of the Lido back into use as a flexible, multi-purpose space for youth activities, digital learning, training and events, supported by a new kitchen and bar facility. The sun terrace has been revitalised with a café pod and a pop-up event space with ramped access to ensure everyone can enjoy some of the best views across Plymouth Sound. In addition, the smaller building that provides both pool and cove access, has been remodelled to provide a youth space with improved accessibility and changing facilities. The changes will enable more people to enjoy the NMP and ensure the community offers and the quality of the restoration is sustained in the long term.



Mount Batten Peninsula – Construction activities have been the focus in 2025 getting ready for the centres physical transformation. Works are currently in progress at both the Mount Batten Centre and the Mount Batten Tower plateau. Additional funding has been secured, enabling the project scope to be expanded to include essential variations which include the refurbishment of the kitchen , café glazing and some other essential works. The completion date for these works is April 2026 when key elements of the exciting new Centre will open.



Mount Batten Pontoon – The contract for the Mount Batten Pontoon was awarded to TMS (October 2025), following extensive design work and additional funding been obtained to support delivery of the pontoon project. The project includes public realm, pontoon for the Mount Batten ferry and vital repairs to the bridgehead (where the bridge to the pontoon comes ashore) which had severely degraded. The pontoon includes berthing for the Mount Batten Centre and an accessible pontoon with hoist to improve disability access to the water. The design process has begun on both the main pontoon design and the temporary pontoon which will be used once the existing pontoon is removed. Completion is expected in summer 2026 project. The pontoon bridgehead design incorporates settlement tiles to encourage marine life to colonise those are as part of the nature enhancement of the project. Below is the design of the new pontoon.



Mount Edgcumbe Garden Battery – Progress on the Garden Battery has been deliberately phased, with 2025 focused on installing protective shutters to safeguard the amazing heritage structure ahead

of winter weather. A delivery programme is now being developed for summer 2026, which will include works to separate the main gallery from the rear ammunition rooms, enabling bat roosting in line with ecological requirements. Initial protective works, including shutter installation and blast-cover repairs, have already been completed.



Community Access Points – In 2025 permission was obtained from the NLHF to break down the capital budget into smaller parts targeting community-identified needs, expanding boundaries, and adopting an Asset Based Community Development approach integrated with work to enable communities to more easily access the NMP from different parts of the City. Current plans for Ernesettle Creek include extending the existing pathway to improve accessibility, adding benches, handrails, and some vegetation management, with support from local groups and Kawasaki for site access and equipment storage. A condition survey of the historic causeway has been commissioned to prevent disrepair and ensure safety and this will inform any repair works needed to ensure the causeway is safe into the future.

3. The Activity Plan Delivery

The Activity Plan continues to drive community engagement, placing Marine Citizenship at the centre. 2025 delivery combined city-wide pop-ups with place-based work and targeted health and youth provision. Highlights include:

Meet the Marine Park (MTMP) is a mobile, free-to-access education and engagement stand designed to connect Plymouth residents with the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP). In 2025, MTMP visited every ward in the city and engaged 4,308 individuals across a wide range of community events, collecting valuable data on public knowledge, perceptions, suggestions, and barriers to accessing PSNMP.

Visitor feedback revealed strong interest in learning about PSNMP's wildlife and available opportunities, while common barriers included transport limitations, financial constraints, and physical inaccessibility. These insights highlight the importance of inclusive design and targeted outreach.



Pathways to the Sea The Pathways to the Sea programme is designed to help physically connect people with the NMP. It continues to develop and routes have been suggested after consultation with: Public Health, Active Devon, Active Travel, National Trust, Plymouth Active Leisure, The Ramblers Association, The Outdoor Partnership, South West Coast Path, The TAMARA project, and PCC PROW officer.

The process of identifying suitable routes involved socio-economic heatmap analysis to identify priority audience areas and existing community hubs. There has then been an initial assessment of Accessibility, links to existing walking groups, access to green and blue space along the route, links

with existing routes/pathways and possible interpretation/digital options. These routes are now being assessed further for what might be needed in terms of any wayfinding, stakeholder engagement and alignment with other projects including the possibility of building citizen science projects or other activities into the trail.

Rockpool Encounters Throughout 2025 rock pooling is an activity that has been used by PSNMP Rangers to provide an initial engagement with the amazing marine life that calls Plymouth Sound home. Groups from YMCA, Scouts, Improving Lives Plymouth and The Kings Trust have all had opportunities to explore and learn about life in rockpools. In 2026 a partnership is being developed with The Rockpool Project to deliver monthly public events at Firestone Bay. This partnership will enable more members of the public to take part in these free events.

PSNMP volunteers have progressed beyond basic rock pooling and are supporting data collection on the marine life in the sound by regularly taking part in Shoresearch surveys, a programme developed by The Wildlife Trusts and now being delivered by PSNMP Rangers in Plymouth Sound.

Coastal Cleans – The PSNMP Ranger team carry out monthly MCS Beachwatch surveys at Blagdons Meadow and Tinside Cove. Coastal cleans have been used by the team throughout 2025 as an activity to engage communities with some of the pollution problems facing Plymouth Sound. These activities are always well supported and receive good feedback from participants. In the past year rangers have also explored the wellbeing benefits of this activity and at Tinside started a session called Walk, Talk and Tidy Up, which was an accessible coastal clean-up that combines environmental action, physical activity, and social interaction. This has been continued every other week throughout the winter, and a regular group of 5 -10 participants are now involved in helping to keep the area clean but also reporting improved mental health through a sense of shared purpose.



Festivals: Seafest

PSNMP again partnered with Plymouth Waterfront Partnership for Seafest 2025 and delivered a vibrant, citywide celebration across Plymouth's waterfront, attracting an estimated 12,000 visitors despite challenging weather conditions that required several programme changes and cancellations. The festival achieved significant digital reach, generating over 1 million social media impressions. Popular activities included the 90p Tinside swims (774 participants), the whale theatre at Royal William Yard (245 visitors, sold out sessions), Mount Batten Tower (175 visitors) and Mount Edgumbe house tours and walks, all receiving enthusiastic public feedback. Sustainable travel initiatives also proved successful, with nearly 1000 people taking the opportunity to use the discounted Mount Batten ferry or Shark & Ride.

Survey responses reflected strong public engagement: 95% of visitors were likely or highly likely to recommend the event, 86% said they were more likely to revisit locations, and 84% felt more inspired to learn about the National Marine Park. Public feedback comments praised the friendliness, educational value and uniqueness of the activities—particularly the whale theatre, tower tours and history walks.

**Festivals: Community Access Weekend**

The inaugural PSNMP Community Access Weekend in March 2025 marked a major step forward in widening inclusion and reducing barriers to engagement with the National Marine Park, welcoming 1,341 attendees—an impressive 89% of the 1,500 invited community group participants. Designed specifically for families from low socioeconomic backgrounds, health conditions or impairments, ethnic communities, and older residents, the event offered tailored accessibility measures such as adjusted lighting, BSL, Polish and Romanian interpreters, a mobile changing facility, and free children's meals.

Engagement was strongest from PL1 and PL5, and 67% of visitors opted for paper entry, highlighting local digital poverty and the importance of nondigital formats. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants praising the supportive environment and opportunities for first time engagement. The event also surfaced critical learning around inclusivity, staff training, and the need for cocreation with community groups. As a result, the weekend not only expanded the reach and relevance of the NMP but also generated clear next steps, including establishing a DEI working group, procuring an inclusion consultant, and embedding accessibility more deeply into future events, programmes, and infrastructure.

SeaWell (BlueMind) - The SeaWell programme has emerged as a cornerstone of the National Marine Park's wellbeing mission, integrating inclusive, trauma informed blue health activities that help people build confidence, connection, and long-term engagement with Plymouth Sound. Rooted in the Five Ways to Wellbeing and designed to break down physical, financial, social, and cultural barriers, SeaWell supports priority groups through accessible activities such as Safe and Sound cold water wellbeing sessions, Blue Connections group activities, coastal cleans, and nature-based youth programmes. The flagship Safe and Sound programme at Tinside demonstrated particularly strong impact, with 92% of participants more likely to return, 96% reporting improved water safety skills, and 79% gaining new wellbeing tools.

Participants consistently reported increased confidence, reduced loneliness, and a strengthened sense of belonging, with one attendee sharing: "I never thought I'd feel safe in the water again now I'm floating, swimming, and volunteering too." Through partnerships with health providers, community organisations, and wellbeing specialists, SeaWell is successfully transforming one off engagement into sustained blue health participation, reducing inequalities, enhancing resilience, and ensuring that everyone, regardless of background or ability, can experience the therapeutic benefits of Plymouth Sound.

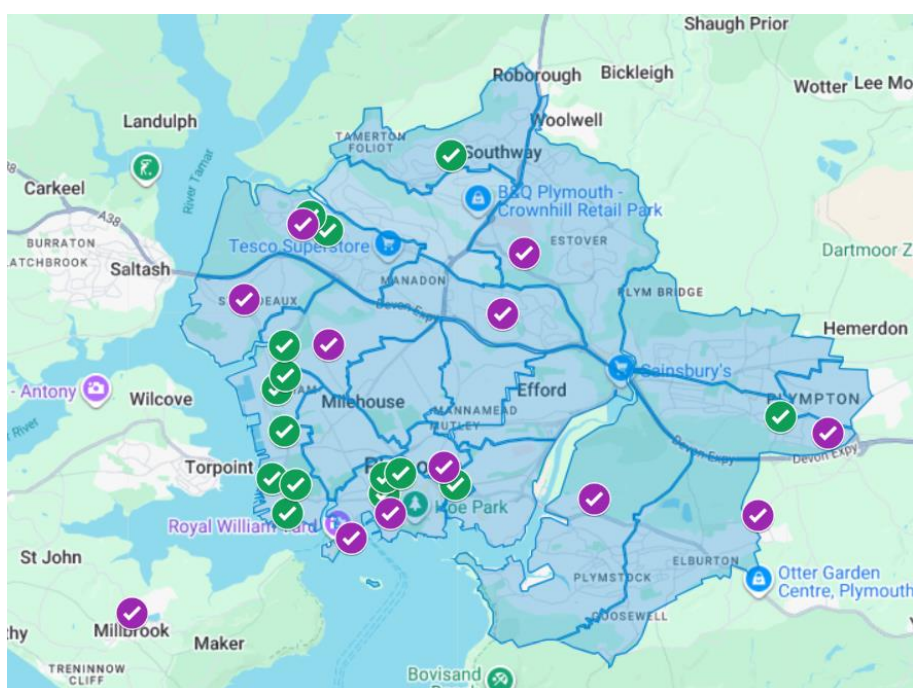
Sea in our school – Our Formal School Offer

The Sea In Our School (SIOS) programme delivered a full year of activity in 2025, completing the first cycle of cohort engagement and initiating preparations for the 2025/26 academic year. Across the year, 37 classes took part in benchmarking sessions, National Marine Park (NMP) visits, and follow-up learning activities designed to support Marine Citizenship through hands-on, creative, and curriculum-linked experiences.

During the spring term, external specialists delivered sessions to all 37 classes (970 pupils), offering a menu of six experiential workshops ranging from sustainable local seafood cookery to engineering challenges, digital storytelling, dance inspired by marine species, and environmental problem-solving. In the summer term, all classes accessed a suite of live virtual experiences, with the SIOS team broadcasting from key locations across the Sound—including Smeaton's Tower, seagrass beds, Mount Batten rockpools, the fish quay, and the Brittany ferry. These sessions were recorded and requested by schools for continued classroom use.

The autumn term focused on benchmarking and site visits. All 37 classes completed baseline evaluation activities and attended structured visits to NMP gateway locations. Cohort A schools undertook an active programme at Mount Batten Watersports and Activities Centre—bell boating,

Overall, SIOS has successfully embedded structured marine learning, strengthened connections between young people and the Sound, and provided a platform for longer-term monitoring of progression along the Marine Citizenship pathway.



Additionally, we have placed greater focus on volunteer upskilling and wellbeing. On a scale of 1-5, 64% of volunteers felt they were completely comfortable in their volunteer team (5), 36% felt mostly

comfortable (3/4). So far, we have hosted 17 monthly social events for volunteers to feel connected, and comfortable within their team. These events have supported our partnerships across the city with six other volunteering groups being invited to participate monthly.

As well as this, we began a new project in autumn 2025, providing weekly knowledge building sessions to the volunteers. The feedback from these sessions has been significant, with volunteers speaking of enhanced physical and social wellbeing, team cohesion and skills improvement.

A survey from July 2025, showed 71% of volunteers feel they have gained skills through volunteering with PSNMP. To increase this, we have been working to release further and more in-depth training opportunities for volunteers, as well as co-developing with a volunteer working group, event leader and ambassador roles, which will be rolled out in March 2026.

We are also incredibly pleased to have furthered our reach with our priority audiences:

- 16% of volunteers identified themselves as Asian or Asian British, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, Mixed, or 'other'. – Plymouth 2021 census highlights just 5.1% identifying themselves as the above.
- 5% with disability, but 81% answered 'prefer not to say'
- 3% under 18, 49% 18-35, 21% 36-60, 27% 60+

PSNMP Community Grants – Blue Sparks

Across 2025 the PSNMP launched its Community Grants programme, Blue Sparks. Plymouth is full of passionate people who are proud of their city and particularly the areas in which they live. One of the principle aims of the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP) is to encourage these communities to connect to and engage with the sea, and coastal surroundings.

The Blue Sparks scheme will allow grass root organisations to initiate and develop their own targeted project that will have a focus on improving their wellbeing, natural or heritage assets within and around Blue Spaces in the PSNMP.

Grants of this type are extremely valuable in contributing to a sense of ownership and inclusion in the PSNMP ensuring what is important to people is reflected in their involvement. It will bring communities together, adding their voice to the Park in a lasting way that can be enjoyed by all. Ultimately helping people rekindle that connection to the sea, exploring old traditions and creating new ones.

The Blue Sparks Programme sparked huge interest in it's first year, with significant community response, 37 projects registered their interest requesting a total value of £123,229.19, of which 33 of these were invited to submit a final application for review.

The programme was only initially budgeted to grant £20,000 to the community in the first round, however due to the significant impact and community subscription to this programme, officers reviewed the funding total with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and were able to allocate an additional £20,000, allowing a total of £40,000 to be granted in the first year of the Blue Sparks programme.

In December of 2025 10 organisations were selected by an advisory panel to be granted the funding, these organisations will develop their projects in 2026. These community-led projects collectively strengthen marine citizenship, heritage understanding, environmental action, and wellbeing across Plymouth and surrounding communities. Each takes a different approach—creative, cultural, environmental, skills-based or research-driven—to help people connect with Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.

PSNMP Gateways Activation

PSNMP Swim Safe & Safe and Sound Plymouth Active Leisure (PAL) –

The capital refurbishment has transformed Tinside from a summer-only destination into a year-round, multi-use space for the city. The improvements include a new multi-purpose youth, community and events space on the previously derelict first floor; a revamped building between the lido and Tinside Cove providing a base for youth workers, rangers, and volunteers; a renovated terrace overlooking the Sound, with public seating, a coffee pod, and a dedicated event space available for private hire.

Delivered in partnership with Plymouth City Council Youth Services (YS), the PSNMP and Plymouth Active Leisure (PAL) successfully engaged over 2,000 participants across a diverse programme of events in 2025. The most popular initiative, Youth Night, accounted for 1,353 attendees, demonstrating strong demand for youth-focused, inclusive evening activities.

Swim Safe continues to develop in engaging residents across the city to ensure they have the skills to be safe in the water. A particular attendee with neurodiverse needs joined the programme with low confidence and self-esteem. Through consistent support and encouragement, they not only developed their own skills but voluntarily began to demonstrate skills to other attendees. This act of peer support not only reflected their growing confidence but also contributed positively to the learning environment for others. Attending these sessions has given them a clear sense of purpose and direction.

They are now preparing to take an entry-level pool helper/teaching qualification, enabling them to build on his progress and inspire other swimmers.

This outcome demonstrates the programme's success in improving participants' skills, confidence, and social engagement, while also developing future contributors to the swimming community.

Safe and Sound Sessions were specifically focused on inclusivity and accessibility. As a new addition to the Swim Safe programme, Safe and Sound introduced adult sessions focused on the benefits of cold-water swimming and essential water safety. Plymouth Active Leisure (PAL) delivered Swim Safe content, while a Blue Health Coach Ranger, from PSNMP, led the wellbeing elements with support from NMP volunteers.

Two groups from Devon Mind (over 55s - 99 participant slots filled over 7 sessions) and Improving Lives Plymouth (153 slots filled over 11 sessions). participated in Safe and Sound sessions every Wednesday morning. During the in-water session, participants were also encouraged to practice mindfulness techniques and thinking.

Activate @ Mount Batten – Despite significant capital works at the Mount Batten Centre, the programme maintained strong levels of engagement through a combination of free and subsidised activity days, targeted partner outreach, and adapted delivery using temporary welfare facilities. Across the year, 171 session attendances were enabled to take part in new experiences, with participants reporting clear improvements in physical and emotional wellbeing, including increased feelings of calm, happiness, and connection to the natural environment.

While access to some facilities—such as the pontoon hoist used for inclusive watersports—was restricted during construction, the Centre continued to deliver tailored sessions for priority groups. This included activity days for Friends and Families of Special Children Plymouth, enabling young people with physical health needs and those with ADHD/autism to participate in bell boating and land-based activities, alongside four sessions for Improving Lives Plymouth supporting adults with ADHD, autism and social isolation.

During the school summer holidays, the Centre delivered three weeks of targeted outreach for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods including Stonehouse, Keyham and Ernesettle. Working with established partners such as Pembroke Street Youth Centre, Connecting Youth CIC and Wolseley Trust, 180 activity places were provided. Young people took part in kayaking or paddleboarding with a focus on sea safety, complemented by rockpooling at Mount Batten Bay, coastal cleans and visits to the historic Mount Batten Tower. These sessions strengthened long-term partnerships and continued to expand equitable access to blue-space experiences during the redevelopment period.



Community Anchor Points: Firestone Bay and Ernesettle Creek

The PSNMP Rangers have continued to work in the Community Anchor Points of Firestone Bay and Ernesettle Creek delivering a wide-ranging mix of public events and targeted community engagement, successfully strengthening local connection to coastal habitats, citizen science, and marine heritage. Across Firestone Bay, *112 participants* took part in *13 public events* including coastal cleans, social gatherings, history walks, bioblitz activities, and creative ocean-themed sessions, while *167 participants* engaged through six community-group partnerships ranging from Scouts and Timebank to Moondogz and youth clubs. The Stonehouse Scouts programme proved especially impactful. Sessions supporting 25 young people at a time to build coastal awareness, species ID skills, teamwork, and citizen-science confidence, culminating in the group earning their Junior Coastal Ranger badges. Feedback highlighted enthusiasm and joy, with Scout leaders reflecting that young people “always come back with big happy smiley faces”.

Thank you all for the fantastic experiences you and your team have given our young people. They have all really enjoyed the session and our parents have been telling us what a great time they have had which is lovely to hear..... It has been such an amazing and educational time for our young people and it's great to see them exploring their local environment. Scout Leader

Wellbeing sessions collaborating with mental health charity Moondogz created powerful emotional and social outcomes, supporting people experiencing anxiety, PTSD, social isolation, and burnout, with participants describing feelings of safety, belonging, and transformation—one attendee calling the group their “tribe” after finding acceptance and confidence on the water.

At Ernesettle Creek, *89 participants* joined public nature-based activities such as bird walks, pathway maintenance, history walks, and bat surveys, while *86 people* engaged through Millford SEND schools, Connecting Youth CIC and Timebank.

The Timebank groups in Ernesettle and Stonehouse played an important role in the programme development, with *14 participants* joining co-designed sessions that explored personal relationships with local blue spaces, coastal memories, and barriers to accessing the Sound. Activities included a creek-inspired watercolour workshop and a foraging session at Devil’s Point. Insightful feedback revealed the needs and preferences of different groups: the Ernesettle cohort, predominantly older residents with mobility challenges, expressed enthusiasm for painting workshops, maritime history, and birdwatching, while the Stonehouse group identified transport, mobility, and confidence as key barriers and preferred group-based outdoor skills sessions such as identification, foraging, and beach cleans, as well as quiet aquarium sessions. These appreciative enquiry style sessions are helping to not only shape the activity programme going forward but also contribute to the development of the capital interventions for these areas.

Moving into 2026 the PSNMP Rangers will be starting work with the community adjacent to Kinterbury Creek and exploring the opportunities here for the next anchor point of the park.

4. 2025 Marcomms Overview

As we continue to build on our communications and marketing year-on-year, we can see clear trends emerging from the new approaches we've been trialling to engage our community online. Most recently, on 4 January 2026, Organic Social sessions spiked far above the expected levels and is likely linked to a highly successful marine park jobs, marketing campaign on Facebook, which saw a 67,700% week-over-week uplift.

These social and website insights are strong indicators that we are not only broadening our reach and engagement but also creating content that resonates strongly with our audiences.

In Q4 we released new brand guidelines and worked with key partners to agree on a new narrative. These documents have brought much-needed consistency to previously varied messaging about PSNMP. Shared with partners and stakeholders, they will support continuity and a consistency understanding going forward, helping to further strengthen our communications and brand identity. We have also continued to create digital pathways and support teams with interpretation projects, including the PSNMP map, and have assisted with the rollout of the Stay Salty, Nature campaign.

Toward the end of 2025, we secured a number of key press moments, celebrating the capital works at Tinside, reflecting on the summer, and highlighting the year-round coffee pod. This generated valuable coverage, including in the Plymouth Herald and on BBC Spotlight, both excellent opportunities to showcase PSNMP and the tangible impact of completed projects. Alongside this, press and collaborative activity with key city stakeholders continued, including Marjon University's PSNMP Minecraft project, which attracted tabloid interest across Devon. Combined with key moments from the Nature Campaign, such as Rays of Hope, BBC Countryfile, and BBC News, these helped position PSNMP prominently across both nature and heritage narratives.

Marcomms Strategy 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, we can continue building on our efforts to cultivate strong press relationships and secure positive exposure for our upcoming projects. With our Marketing Strategy nearing completion, we also aim to work in a more strategically planned way strengthening our profile and further shaping stakeholder and public perceptions of the Park. Our previous experiences and successes will underpin the delivery and evaluation of this work, ensuring it remains effective, consistent, and evidence-led.

5. Digital Park

Sea for yourself - Plymouth Culture and Horizons progressed the four-year 'Sea for Yourself' programme.

- Commission 1 – David Cotterrell has shared an updated proposition for the commission 1 that sets out the development of a central data systems using water/tidal data which then produces creative/digital outputs including 1) public realm interventions 2) digital screen displays and 3) an immersive experience. It is now proposed that rather than splitting delivery across two phases the work will be more impactful if launched at the same time in April 2026.
- Commission 2 – 6 shortlisted artists were invited to Plymouth for interview which included a partner panel interview and a community group facilitated session. The panel and community representatives unanimously selected an artist duo for the commission, and they have already started working.

- Artist residencies – A further two residencies have now been contracted and the behind-the-scenes work is beginning. One focuses on the Mount Batten centered working with intergenerational participants and the second sharing the stories through an audio work of 'Migrant Mothers'. Both works will come to fruition in summer 2026.
- Creative Health – The creative health network was launched in partnership with the Wellbeing Hubs Network with a guest speaker from the National Centre for Creative Health. A thought leadership article is in development and will support a national conversation about the value of creative health with a particular focus on Blue Health/Mind.

Website

Work has been progressing in 2025 to build a new website for the NMP that enables a fantastic and inclusive users experience. It is due for completion in spring 2026. It will offer a more user-friendly experience for our marine park users/advocates. Creating a digital pathway to the PSNMP It will allow users to explore the park narratives, visually explore elements of the park and engage with events.

As an addition to the website build, we will be including a Stay Salty Scale (see below) as part of the Nature Campaign roll out, as noted below, this is envisaged to help us evaluate behaviour change, as NMP users move through the salty scale, based on their personal journey and actions. This will link this to our CRM system to enable peoples progress on the salty scale to be used as a behaviour change evaluation tool.



Stay Salty Scale will be implemented, to help measure behaviour change. Extra Salty being the best outcome.

This scale will also be used across PSNMP projects such as SIOS.

This will be linked to the events and tracked in the CRM. To track how salty users are over time. This can then be used for evaluation.

6. Evaluation

2025 has seen the programme consolidating its approach and continuing to build engagement and action. Building on the foundations created during the 2024, the programme has shifted from early establishment and high-volume engagement towards deeper, more targeted and more inclusive delivery. With capital works progressing and the Nature Campaign framework strengthening evaluation, the programme is now well positioned to consolidate learning and accelerate impact in 2026.

Across the programme's five delivery strands - Activities, Digital, Interpretation, Nature Boost and Capital - clear progress is emerging in wellbeing, skills development, access to blue spaces, marine citizenship, and the integration of heritage into everyday life.

Delivery teams, partners, volunteers and community groups have all contributed to strengthening the reach, relevance and impact of the programme. Evidence from monitoring data, project-level evaluations, participant surveys, ranger reflections, and the Plymouth City Survey

2025 demonstrate that the Marine Park has the potential to grow into an important asset for the wellbeing, identity, education and cultural life of the City.

Key learnings from the 2025 review include:

- Inclusion and delivery practice have strengthened, with inclusion now embedded as a cross-cutting function, more adaptive ranger-led engagement, and wider partner collaboration improving access for disadvantaged groups.
- Capacity and evaluation remain key risks, with the programme highly dependent on ranger capacity and limited by fragmented data systems; introducing dedicated monitoring support will enhance insight, learning and programme evolution.
- Place-based, equitable delivery and marine-citizenship development are progressing, supported by Community Access Points, targeted community partnerships, and the introduction of the Salty Scale as a structured behavioural-change framework.

Based on some of these learnings the recommendations provided for 2026 include, but are not limited to;

- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation by prioritising CRM implementation, and refocusing reporting on progression and engagement quality, using tools such as the Salty Scale.
- Build delivery capacity and coherence through renewal of the inclusion officer post, clearer coordination across workstreams, and embedding progression pathways that support repeat engagement.
- Align resources and communications by undertaking a full budget review to reflect the programme's evolving focus on wellbeing/blue health and developing a targeted monitoring and evaluation plan for marketing and communications.

7. The Development of the Park

In an incredibly busy year of Horizons delivery, we have been working hard behind the scenes to build the structure needed that will become the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park for the future. The Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which was established in late 2023 is now building momentum with the appointment of additional trustees to complement the founding ones. A skills audit is in development for 2026 so we can ensure the Board has all the necessary skills to take the PSNMP forwards. A lively and productive workshop in December enabled the new trustees to be immersed in the challenges and opportunities for the CIO.

The main focus of the CIO has been on the development of the plan for the legacy of the Horizons Project. This is complex and multi-layered piece of work as we want not only to ensure that the progress made through the Horizons programme is sustained but we need to think about how we can broaden and deepen our impact. Alongside this we are creating a financial plan and a fundraising plan to ensure that we can sustain the CIO into the future.

Whilst Horizons delivery has been significant this year, the PSNMP has also partnered with a number of organisations to deliver some additional projects. These have included:

- Collaborating with the university and others on the Plymouth Fishfinger
- Development of the NMP Minecraft world working with a group of neurodivergent young people from the city
- Growing the NMP Alliance to 1000 members.
- Supporting our PhD students in their research

For 2026 our priorities are:

- To build the CIO into a robust and resilient entity
- To seek funding through the fundraising strategy to secure the financial position
- To develop a clear delivery plan for 2028 onwards for the CIO
- To move forward the integration between the Horizons programme legacy and the CIO
- To continue to support projects across the city that align with PSNMP objectives.

8. Plans for 2026

In 2024 we were looking forward to a year of firsts as we started to deliver against the NMP aspirations. The last year has been a year of building, physically with the capital works at Tinside and Mount Batten, plus building our teams, our partnerships and our programmes. As we look forward to year three, we are excited about a year of growing our impact. We are building from great foundations put in place during the first few years and learning from work to date. This all enables 2026 to be the year where we deepen our impact and increase the reach of the NMP benefits.

Highlights for 2026 will include:

Activity Plan

- Embed community-designed capital improvements at Ernesettle and Firestone Bay, fully integrated with the Pathways to the Sea programme.
- Expand and diversify volunteering within the PSNMP, introducing structured Volunteer Leader and Volunteer Ambassador roles to build capacity, strengthen community stewardship and support year-round activation.
- Develop and launch enhanced skills pathways through the PSNMP Inspire programme, enabling young people and adults to gain transferable blue-skills linked to nature, heritage, digital, and maritime sectors.
- Deepen inclusive practice through sustained partnership with Improving Lives Plymouth, ensuring accessible design, targeted outreach and co-produced engagement with people facing health conditions, sensory barriers or disadvantage.
- Increase activation at the Mount Batten Centre following completion of capital works, utilising new and improved facilities to scale participation, blue-health activity and gateway programming.
- Commence delivery of the first group of Blue Spark community projects, supporting environmental action and cultural connection across Plymouth's communities.

Nature Boost

- Launch the 'Stay Salty' nature campaign, supported by a suite of toolkits and partner-led delivery, to inspire pro-nature behaviour's, strengthen identity with the Sound and improve community wellbeing.

- Delivery of the Seahorse Species Programme, including public-facing guidance to support citizen awareness and conservation.
- Roll out of the Wader Watch initiative, creating accessible entry points to mudflat nature, and enabling communities to be involved in species monitoring.

Capital Restoration & Repurposing

- Complete the Mount Batten Centre and Tower Plateau work, progress construction of the new Mount Batten pontoon, and continue to activate Tinside Lido with a sustainable operational model through winter and off-peak periods.
- Initiate Phase 2 development at Mount Edgcumbe, progressing planned heritage works to enhance access, interpretation, and environmental resilience at the Garden Battery and associated areas.

Digital Park

- Delivery of the first public outputs of Sea for Yourself, enabling city-wide creative experiences that connect residents to the Sound through digital, cultural and immersive engagement.
- Launch of the new PSNMP website.
- Implementation of the upgraded CRM, aligning digital platforms, interpretation and evaluation systems.

Interpretation

- Installation of artwork in the new interpretation space being developed as part of the Mount Batten Centre capital works.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation – It is recommended that the committee note the PSNMP update and support the ongoing delivery as set out in the report.

Reason – The Horizons project is progressing well against its ambitions, and the Park's development and the projects legacy work is well underway. Support for both the project and the legacy work is still required.

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting: 04 February 2026

Title of Report: **Plymouth Economic Strategy: Civic Pride & Regeneration Pillar Update**

Lead Member: Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)

Lead Strategic Director: Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)

Author: Emma Wilson, Head of Regeneration & Growth

Contact Email: Emma.wilson@plymouth.gov.uk

Your Reference:

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide the Panel with an annual update on the Civic Pride & Regeneration pillar of the Plymouth Economic Strategy.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. It is recommended that the Panel note this report and the continued focus on Civic Pride & Regeneration as a key element of the Plymouth Economic Strategy.

Alternative options considered and rejected

This is a report to update the Panel therefore no alternative options are required.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This report supports:

1. The Corporate Plan's prioritisation of: Build more homes – for social rent and affordable ownership and Green Investment, jobs, skills and better education.
2. The Plymouth Plan:
 - Strategic Objective 2 '**Delivering a growing city**' where 'cultural strengths' help to deliver quality and sustainable growth.
 - Policy GRO3 '**Accelerating the delivery of new homes**' by contributing to growth in housing in the centre of the city;
 - Strategic Objective 3 '**Delivering the international city**' where Britain's Ocean City is an international city that local communities can enjoy, be a part of and be proud of.
 - Policy INT4 '**Delivering a distinctive, dynamic cultural centre of regional, national and international renown**' by contributing to a 'cultural programme' and establishing 'cultural hubs', while raising the profile of 'cultural assets'.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

None.

Financial Risks

The PCC cost associated with supporting these growth projects are funded within existing approved revenue budgets

Legal Implications

None as a result of this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None arising as a direct impact of this update report.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

None arising as a direct impact of this update report

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Plymouth Economic Strategy: Civic Pride & Regeneration Pillar Update							
B	Presentation							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Emma Wilson											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 26/01/2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Laing approved via email											
Date approved: 26/01/2026											

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Plymouth Economic Strategy – Civic Pride and Regeneration

Introduction

The Plymouth Economic Strategy (PES), adopted in March 2024, includes Civic Pride and Regeneration as one of 4 Pillars for driving the city's growth.



Figure 1: Illustration of Plymouth Economic Strategy structure.

Each Pillar has a dedicated leadership and support structure. Civic Pride and Regeneration have:

Leads

- **Cabinet** Cllr. Jemima Laing
- **PGB** James Mackenzie-Blackman
- **PCC** Emma Wilson

Support

- **PGB** Paul Fieldsend-Danks and David Bayliss
- **PCC** Victoria Pomery and Emma Hewitt

A Plan for Action

At the heart of this Pillar is a clear focus on the city centre, recognising it as the primary driver of Plymouth's economic, social and cultural regeneration. The city centre leads the regeneration narrative, with culture and the visitor economy acting as strategic levers to strengthen place, support investment and create the conditions for new homes, mixed-use development and placemaking to sustain long-term urban living.

This aligns with our work across Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP), the city's ports and the continued development of Plymouth's image and brand. These elements support the transformation of the city centre.

At the heart of this Pillar is a particular focus on:

- An attractive and vibrant city centre
- Culture Place making

This aligns to our work in Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP) as well as our ports and the development and improvement of the city's image and brand.

Summary

This report will provide a detailed update on progress with the city centre, while also reflecting on the important role that culture plays in regeneration.

Since the PES was adopted, major progress has been made through our strategic investment partnership with Homes England, the New Towns proposal, commencement of the City Living Framework, and investment in the Civic Centre. These now form a single, coherent programme for transforming Plymouth.

At the centre of this work is the city centre, which remains fundamental to Plymouth's economic, cultural and social future. While recent investment has strengthened leisure, culture and health provision, the missing element has been city centre living. The City Living Framework will provide the approach to deliver this, bringing planning, culture, transport, placemaking and community engagement together.

The Civic Centre will be the first major proof of concept for urban living, delivering 144 new homes and demonstrating investor confidence. Alongside the New Towns proposal and strategic partnership with Homes England, this creates a clear pathway for long-term regeneration and a more vibrant, sustainable city centre.

Purpose of the Pillar

The purpose of this pillar is to strengthen how Plymouth is perceived by residents, businesses, visitors and the media, creating a compelling story that attracts investment, talent and growth. Central to this is the transformation of the city centre into a place where people can live, work, play, socialise and shop. Cultural place making is at the fundamental to regeneration, city living and a thriving nighttime economy.

Working with the leadership group, we will ensure it fully addresses the future of the city centre, recognising it as the primary driver of Plymouth's economic, social and cultural success. While the PES builds on the work of Destination Plymouth and Plymouth Culture through the Visitor Plan, Culture Plan and city branding, these are now positioned as key enablers rather than standalone outcomes. Their role is to support a stronger, more vibrant and better-connected city centre.

As we develop this reframed approach, it will be directly linked to the City Living Framework, which provides the mechanism for delivering high-quality homes, mixed-use development, public realm improvements and a stronger urban community. Culture, visitor activity and placemaking work all act as catalysts within this model—helping to animate the city centre, drive footfall, and support the long-term regeneration programme.

City Centre

Over the past decade we have delivered major improvements in leisure, culture and health, for example the Barcode (2019), The Box (2000) and the first Community Diagnostics Centre due to complete in April 2026. The critical missing link has been housing. Creating a thriving, sustainable urban community requires more people living in the heart of the city.

Plymouth City Council has previously been constrained on delivering regeneration resulting in a piecemeal approach taking opportunities where they existed. A comprehensive approach was beyond resources available. This has since evolved into a far more ambitious and coordinated programme. The Memorandum of Understanding with Homes England, the investment in the Civic Centre, and now the New Towns proposal represent a step-change in scale, capacity and ambition. These are not isolated projects—they form a coherent long-term programme of change.

New Towns Proposal

The proposed 'Town in the City' New Towns programme will provide 10,000 new, well-designed, well-connected homes, with a target of 40% to be affordable, in a vibrant and attractive city. Quality homes will support the retention and attraction of skilled employees to take advantage of the employment growth as an outcome of the £4.4bn government investment in Plymouth's dockyard.

We know that the City is facing a median jobs gap of 25,000 in 2035 between the required workforce and working age population. We will need over 21,000 homes by 2050 and 100,000m² new employment space. Babcock have a requirement for 5,500 jobs and we have growth of 12,000 jobs already baked in by previous investments and announcements.

The starting point to deliver upon this plan is the commissioning of the City Living Framework. This approach is more than just a masterplan but a framework for how we will bring the New Town forward and the sort of place that we are going to create. It will include our cultural aspirations, our future retail offer, our ambition for the evening and nighttime economy and many other important issues

The City Living Framework

Plymouth is embarking on one of the most ambitious urban transformations in its history. The City Living Framework is a bold commission led by Plymouth City Council, Homes England, and the UK Government. This nationally significant project - will deliver 10,000 new homes, vibrant public spaces, and a thriving economy at the heart of Britain's Ocean City. This is about more than bricks and mortar. It's about creating a city that attracts talent, fosters innovation, and celebrates community life. By reimagining how we live, work, and connect, Plymouth will become one of the most desirable urban destinations in the UK. The City Living Framework integrates planning, culture, placemaking, transport and design into a single approach, underpinned by our commitment to meaningful and ongoing community engagement.

WSP in partnership with other nationally recognised experts were recently appointed (December 2025) to deliver the Framework with Professor Jim Coleman their Chief Economist leading the commission. He has extensive experience shaping economic strategies for major urban transformations in the UK and internationally. Joining Jim in the leadership team is Glenn Howells of Howells as Chief Placemaking Advocate and Framework lead. He is an award-winning architect and urban designer, renowned for city-scale regeneration projects including Birmingham's Future City Plan. He will lead the preparation of the city living framework. Alex Ely of Mae Architects is the City Placemaking Advocate and Masterplan Lead. Former Mayor's Design Advocate for London and RIBA Stirling Prize winner, Alex brings national authority on housing quality and design standards and will lead a team of designers on the city centre core masterplan.

The leadership team is complemented by Gayatri Suryawanshi (WSP) as lead urban designer and development planner. She is an experienced urbanist and architect who will guide urban design and development planning to create inclusive, high-quality spaces. Jason Langley (WSP) as Infrastructure Delivery Lead, is a Chartered Civil Engineer and will lead infrastructure delivery, ensuring robust transport and utilities solutions for the masterplan. Dominic Masters (WSP) is the property market and delivery strategy lead. He is a real estate advisory specialist. He will review the property market and delivery strategy to unlock investment and to ensure deliverability. Daniel Fryd (WSP) is the Engagement and Communications Lead. He is a senior communications specialist with deep expertise in co-design and stakeholder engagement for complex regeneration projects. Maxine Kennedy (WSP) is the Social Value Lead. She authored Homes England's Social Value guidance and will embed locally relevant social value outcomes throughout the programme. Dan Jenkins (WSP) is the Infrastructure and Transport Lead. He leads technical delivery for infrastructure and transport, ensuring sustainable mobility and integrated design solutions.

Gareth Oakley (WSP) is the Sustainability and Net Zero Lead he brings two decades of experience in sustainable master planning and energy strategy. Nick Corbett (WSP) is the Heritage and Placemaking Lead. He is a nationally respected heritage specialist and author of Transforming Cities: Revival in the Square. Michelle Oldfield (WSP) is the Digital and Geospatial Lead. She leads digital innovation and GIS integration, enabling data-driven decision-making and advanced modelling. Simon Yewdall (DNCO) is well known to Plymouth as Brand Strategy Director. He led Plymouth's refreshed city brand and will define the narrative for "City Living" to attract talent and investment. In addition, locally based partners – LHC Design, Gillespie Yunnies, Lavigne Lonsdale, and Makower Architects

bring invaluable local knowledge and design expertise, ensuring proposals are grounded in the city's identity and aspirations.

Programme & Methodology

Phase 1 – Discover (January to March 2026)

The team will start by building a clear picture of Plymouth today and its potential for the future. This includes gathering data, testing ideas, and shaping an early vision for the city centre. Community involvement begins here, and residents, businesses, and local groups will be invited to share their views through surveys, pop-up events, and co-design workshops. These conversations will help define priorities and ensure the vision reflects what matters most to Plymouth people.

Phase 2 – Define (April-July 2026)

Using feedback from the first phase, the team will refine options for the City Living Framework, the City Centre Masterplan, and the Infrastructure Strategy. This stage will include design reviews and scenario testing to make sure proposals are practical, sustainable, and deliverable. Public engagement continues, and people will be able to comment on draft ideas online and at in-person events, helping shape the final plans.

Phase 3 – Deliver (August-October 2026)

The final phase focuses on producing detailed reports, 3D models, sustainability appraisals, and engagement summaries. These will guide delivery on the ground and support Plymouth's case for investment and New Town designation. Residents will see how their input has influenced the plans, with clear "You Said, We Did" updates and opportunities to review the final proposals before adoption and implementation November-December 2026.

The Civic Centre- Market making £36m grant package

PCC have secured circa £18.4m of investment from our government partner Homes England (November 2025) to deliver the redevelopment of the grade II listed Civic Centre. The redevelopment will deliver 144 build-to-rent homes—a product currently absent in Plymouth, yet strongly supported by investor appetite, proving the market for city centre living and driving investor confidence. The basement and podium of the building will deliver a new blue/green skills hub for City College Plymouth, bringing education and skills into the heart of the city centre. In turn supporting the skills investment needed for the Dockyard.

Since the Council took back control of the Civic Centre phase 0 of the works have been completed with internal strip out and the removal of asbestos to make the building safe for construction activity. Currently phase 1 of works are underway with the carrying out of structural investigations to inform repair works required. Alongside this work, over 30 surveys have been or will be carried out to get a detailed picture of what's in and around the building, including where utilities and drainage infrastructure are, both within the Civic and its immediate grounds.

Morgan Sindall have been appointed to carry out pre-development services to enable the redevelopment of the civic centre. We are working closely with them to ensure that the

redevelopment is more than bricks and mortar driving social value for the Plymouth community.

The submission of the revised planning application will be the next significant milestone in moving this unique opportunity for Plymouth forward.

The Importance of Culture

Culture makes places and this has been the reason we have prioritised cultural investments such as the Box over the past decade.

Plymouth has a diverse range of cultural organisations working within and across communities. Plymouth Culture is leading the way in enhancing the city's rich culture and creative sector to deliver growth and enhance wellbeing. Our major cultural assets are leading the way.

Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP) [TRP delivers major boost to Southwest economy | Theatre Royal Plymouth](#)

In January of this year, TRP announced that it has delivered an estimated £53.3 million economic impact in the city of Plymouth and the wider Southwest region during the financial year 2024/2025, up from £45.9m the previous year and marking the most successful period in the theatre's history.

This significant contribution reflects a year when major West End and world-renowned productions chose TRP as their key touring destination for the Southwest region. A defining moment was the internationally acclaimed musical *Hamilton*, which played a six-week summer run and attracted audiences from across the UK and around the world. Other renowned shows to take to TRP's Lyric stage include Disney's *Mary Poppins*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *Fawlty Towers* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Hamilton sold 53,000 tickets across its 46 performances from as far away as Malaysia, Australia and the USA, and this influx of visitors delivered a substantial boost to local hotels, restaurants, transport providers, retail businesses and cultural attractions throughout Plymouth and neighbouring areas.

In total, throughout 2025, the theatre sold 373,133 tickets across more than 651 performances, for 100 different productions. Of these, 37 productions and 253 performances took place in The Drum, TRP's studio theatre, selling a total of 22,150 tickets.

The Box [Five Years On: The Box celebrates its fifth anniversary and outlines its impact | The Box Plymouth](#)

In September 2025, The Box released an independent assessment to mark its fifth anniversary. This assessment highlighted how it has emerged as a significant force in the UK's cultural landscape, generating a £244 million economic footprint while forging partnerships with premier national institutions including the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, and the V&A since opening in autumn 2020. In the first five years The Box has witnessed:

- Over 1.1 million visits
- 56% of visitors are Plymouth residents
- 72,000 visits by international visitors
- Over 100,00 hours of volunteering
- Visits from 89% of all the schools in Plymouth
- Over 2 million objects in the collections
- £28m contribution to the Plymouth economy by visitors to The Box
- £11.3m - the economic impact by The Box in 2024 / 2025

Pillar Projects

Through the development of the Delivery Plan for the PES, 13 of the projects were judged to align primarily with Civic Pride and Regeneration. These projects are currently:

Project Area	Project Name	Lead Organisation
Devonport Place-making	Establishing Devonport as a 'Creative Cluster'	Real Ideas
	Update	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have adopted the city's first creative industries plan. • We have received £20m pride in place funding • We have a social value work stream in Team Plymouth 	
Plymouth Sound National Marine Park	Completing the delivery of the major capital investments	Plymouth City Council
	Update	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have completed the investment of tinside • We are on site at Mountbatten • We plan to start at Mount Edgcume this year 	
	Delivering the 'Sea in our School' programme	Plymouth City Council
	Developing and delivering a creative digital PSNMP programme	Plymouth Culture
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have launched the Place Partnership and Sea in the City digital engagement programme 	
Town within the City Centre	Developing the City Centre masterplan through the City Centre Living Framework	Plymouth City Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have appointed WSP 	
	Investing in our priority sites	Plymouth City Council
	Regenerating the West End- delivery of the Community Diagnostics Centre/s	Plymouth City Council
	Developing a Joint Vehicle- enabling delivery through the new towns proposition	Plymouth City Council
Cultural and Community Place-making	Improving our public realm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Armada Way public realm project is underway 	Plymouth City Council
	Creating Culture and Creative Clusters	Plymouth Culture
	Establishing a Creative / Cultural Business Support and Investment programme	Plymouth Culture
	Growing the night-time economy	Plymouth Culture
	We have appointed a Night Time Economy champion and associated governance	
City Image and Brand	Repositioning the city's image and brand	Destination Plymouth
	We have relaunched the city's BOC brand	

Project Updates

Trial project monitoring reporting was conducted by the PES team in October. Whilst full monitoring has not yet rolled-out, initial data shows that progress is being made with the 13 projects. Following the November trial monitoring reporting, we received 11 reports; this is an 85% response rate. 8 of the projects are listed as 'in progress', meaning they are in active delivery.

As a result of trial monitoring, we are splitting 2 of the projects as they have distinct elements and are overseen by different people. These are:

- Investing in our priority sites – this will now focus on the Civic Centre and Armada North separately
- Improving our public realm – this will now focus on Armada Way and Brunel Plaza separately

As a result of this, there are now 15 projects listed under Civic Pride and Regeneration moving forward in the monitoring reporting.

As part of the reframing that we will undertake with the leadership group, we will review and update the projects listed above to ensure that they address current, not past need.

Next Steps

Through the leadership group, we are:

- Meeting on a quarterly basis
- Scheduling regular monitoring in 2026
- Reviewing individual project progress

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Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Civic Pride & Regeneration Pillar Report

4th February 2026

1 of 4 Pillars in our Economic Strategy



Leads

- **Cabinet** Cllr. Jemima Laing
- **PGB** James Mackenzie-Blackman
- **PCC** Emma Wilson

Support

- **PGB** Paul Fieldsend-Danks & David Bayliss
- **PCC** Victoria Pomery & Emma Hewitt



Civic Pride & Regeneration



“Through this pillar we will seek to build on the work of Destination Plymouth and Plymouth Culture’s leadership of the Visitor Plan, Culture Plan and city branding work. We will focus on how the city is perceived by its residents, businesses, visitors and the media. In doing so, we will ensure that the city has a compelling narrative that can be used to attract businesses, employees and retain graduates. Focus will be given to the city centre to reimagine it as a place to live, work, play, socialise and shop. A continuation of the previous 15 years of growth, regeneration and renewal.”

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A Plan for Action



At the heart of this Pillar is a particular focus on:

- Culture and active leisure
- An attractive and vibrant city centre

This aligns to our work in Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP) as well as our ports and the development and improvement of the city's image and brand.

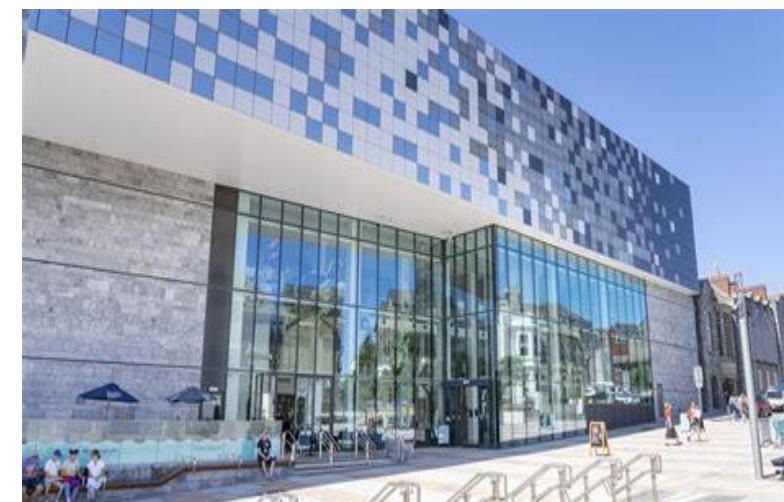
Case Study – Cultural Impact on Growth



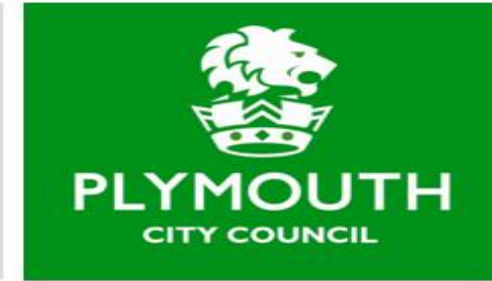
Theatre Royal Plymouth has announced it has delivered an estimated **£53.3 million economic impact** in the city of Plymouth and the wider South West region during the financial year 2024/2025, up from £45.9m the previous year and marking the most successful period in the theatre's history.



The Box has emerged as a significant force in the UK's cultural landscape, generating a **£244 million economic footprint** while forging partnerships with premier national institutions including the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, and the V&A since opening in autumn 2020.



Case Study – Civic Centre

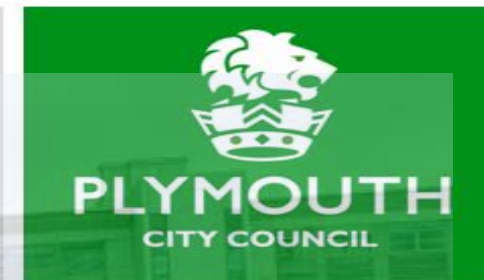


Backed by Homes England and led by Plymouth City Council in partnership with City College Plymouth, the regeneration will deliver:

- **144 new homes** in the iconic tower, designed for modern city-centre living.
- **A Blue-Green Skills Hub** on the lower floors, training thousands of students each year in sustainable technologies and marine innovation.
- Public spaces and ground-floor activity that **reconnect the Civic Centre with the city around it**, including Civic Square, the Theatre Royal and Royal Parade.



City Centre Living Framework



The city centre currently has only around 1,000 homes, compared to 8,000 in similar-sized cities. The City Living Framework will change that - introducing high-quality homes, mixed-use developments, and green spaces to create a thriving urban community.

Our recently appointed team led by WSP will lead a year long commission to co-design an ambitious vision for a new town in the city centre, creating a strong identity and market for urban living. This is about more than housing though- it's about creating a city centre that celebrates culture, fosters innovation, and provides opportunities for all.

Town in the City- New Towns Bid



Government's Taskforce shortlisted Plymouth as 1 of the 12 potential New Towns.

The proposed new town is a compelling opportunity to transform Britain's Ocean City with new high-quality housing to support the jobs created through the investment of an extra £4.4bn in the Navel base at Devonport.

Attracting and retaining skilled workers through high quality development and placemaking.

To deliver 10,000 new homes, well-connected, well-designed, sustainable, 40% affordable.



Next Steps



Through the leadership group, we are:

- Meeting on a quarterly basis
- Scheduling regular monitoring in 2026
- Reviewing individual project progress

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Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	04 February 2026
Title of Report:	Progress update City brand strategy, Visitor and Culture Plans
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth)
Author:	Section 1 - Amanda Lumley, Chief Executive Destination Plymouth Section 2 – Hannah Harris, CEO Plymouth Culture
Contact Email:	Amanda.lumley@plymouth.gov.uk & hannah@plymouthculture.co.uk
Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the committee on work connected to delivery of the city's Visitor and Culture Plans and new Brand strategy.

The report is in two parts:

Section I – Visitor Plan and Brand strategy:

2025 has been an incredibly successful year on several fronts for Destination Plymouth and the partner organisations we represent:

- Working with partners across the city we have successfully led the re-imagination of the city brand and creation of new Brand Strategy, narratives and visuals for the city.
- Alongside this we have started the transition from a visitor led to a broader city place marketing organisation championing all sectors nationally and internationally.
- Many of the projects in the 2030 Visitor Plan are progressing effectively across all the different projects areas with some fantastic results which we have highlighted in this report.

Strategic oversight of this work is led by the Board of Destination Plymouth. In 2023 it was agreed that Destination Plymouth would extend its remit to become a broader city marketing and place brand leading organisation with the purpose of:

- Being the custodian of and drive through the objectives for the City's place-based Brand narrative (Britain's Ocean City) improving perceptions of the city in the eyes of residents, visitors, workforce, students and potential investors

– Co-ordinating and amplify place-based activities (marketing, events, projects, fundraising, lobbying, digital) undertaken by Destination Plymouth, Plymouth Culture, National Marine Park, Plymouth Waterfront Partnership, City Centre Company and the City Council into a single and coherent programme.

–

Section 2 – Culture Plan:

This section of the report provides an update to the committee on the strategic work being undertaken by Plymouth Culture and partners to deliver the objectives set out in the Culture Plan with specific reference to the City of Culture bid.

Recommendations and Reasons

That the Committee:

1. Continues to support the work of Destination Plymouth to lead delivery of the city's Place Brand and Visitor plan strategies working with wider City stakeholders and partners;
2. Supports the continuing transition of Destination Plymouth to a broader remit marketing, growing and positioning the city's 'place' brand going forwards;
3. Recognises the strategic importance, key leadership role and continued significant achievements of the Destination Plymouth, Plymouth City Council, BID and partnership teams in supporting the sector and moving both strategies forwards;
4. Note section 2 of the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Building on previous work to support the Visitor Plan the emerging new Brand Strategy will amplify the good work growing the city's brand and reputation to date and will start to position the city as somewhere to live and work as well as visit. The aim will be to enhance the city's positive reputation, act as catalyst for increasing and attracting talent and provide an overall direction of travel for the city's brand messaging.
2. Not having the Brand and Visitor strategies will affect the city's reputation through fragmented and disjointed messaging and will not maximise opportunities through partnership working on similar objectives. This in turn will impact on the city's ability to attract talent and investment for the longer term. It is crucial that the city is able to actively promote its vibrant culture and innovative business ecosystem to offset negative external perceptions of the city.
3. Over the next ten years Plymouth has a regeneration pipeline of over £9 billion including an investment of £4.5 billion in the dockyard and defence. The Brand and Visitor strategies will significantly support the need to attract new residents to the city to fill the 25,000 vacancies over the next decade alongside the ambitious Plan for Homes 4 which was launched in March 2024 with the overall ambition to deliver a minimum of 5,000 new homes in the city over the next five years. The strategy will also support the Local economic Strategy and 'Team Plymouth' programmes.

The 2030 visitor plan is now in its sixth year of operation and continues to set a direction of travel for growth of the visitor economy in the city. Not having the Brand strategy and Visitor Plan could potentially affect the city's ability to position itself as a destination not just to visit but also as a desirable place to work, live and invest in. This could have significant impacts on the city's overarching growth strategy, the Plymouth Plan, to 2032. The Visitor Plan has been a strong factor in enabling recovery post Covid19 and will act as a key support strategy in growing and positioning the city's 'place' brand going forwards. Building on this the new Brand strategy will amplify the good

work to date and will start to position the city as somewhere to live and work as well as visit. This will enhance the city's reputation, act as catalyst for increasing and attracting talent and provide an overall direction of travel for the city's brand messaging. Not having the Visitor Plan and Brand strategy will affect the city's reputation through fragmented and disjointed messaging and will not maximise opportunities through partnership working on similar objectives. This in turn may impact on the city's ability to attract talent and investment for the longer term.

Section 2 - The input and overview of the relevant scrutiny committee is essential to maintain openness and transparency in relation to the work of the Council and partners.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Section 1:

Plymouth is Britain's Ocean City, and the visitor economy is a major contributor to our economic growth, local community and vibrant waterfront city. It supports the city's vision to be one of Europe's finest waterfront cities. The Visitor Plan and new Brand Strategy support the city council's ambition to make Plymouth a fairer, greener city where everyone does their bit, making Plymouth a great place to grow-up and grow old, whilst minimising the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

In particular the Visitor plan and Brand strategy support the City Council's six priorities - green investment, jobs, skills and better education. Through supporting the attraction and retention of talent and investment in an environmentally and commercially sustainable way. The Visitor Plan is a key driver for the current Plymouth Plan 2032 and this along with the new Brand strategy will help to inform the new Plymouth Plan to 2050 process setting out key narratives and a new positioning for the city as a place to live and work.

The Scrutiny review approach embeds the values of democracy, responsibility, fairness and co-operation.

Section 2:

This supports the City Vision to be one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities and the City Council priority of a vibrant cultural offer.

The Plymouth Plan remains the City's overarching strategic plan, looking ahead to 2034. The Plan sets out a shared direction of travel for its long-term future bringing together a number of strategic planning processes into one place. The Plan sets out the aspiration to be a healthy and prosperous city with a rich arts and cultural environment. The Culture Plan sits alongside this as a mechanism for achieving the strategic objectives and the Creative Industries Plan is a subset of this.

Policy INT4 is of particular relevance as it seeks to delivering a distinctive, dynamic, cultural centre of regional, national and international renown and sets out how the city will support a thriving arts and cultural sector.

The arts and cultural sector have the ability to have a positive impact across a wide range of topic areas ensuring this Culture Plan also contributes to the following policies:

- Policy HEA1 Addressing health inequalities, improving health literacy;
- Policy HEA2 Delivering the best outcomes for children, young people and families;
- Policy HEA4 Playing an active role in the community;
- Policy HEA7 Optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of the natural environment;
- Policy GRO1 Creating the conditions for economic growth;
- Policy GRO2 Delivering skills and talent development;
- Policy INT3 Positioning Plymouth as a major UK destination;
- Policy INT6 Enhancing Plymouth's 'green city' credentials;

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**Section 1:**

Destination Plymouth Ltd. was formed in 2008 and incorporated in June 2010 as a private/public sector partnership and arm's length company of Plymouth City council. There is currently no provision for Destination Plymouth in revenue budgets going forwards.. UK Shared Prosperity Funding is currently supporting Destination Plymouth until March 2026. From 2026 to 2027 part funding has been secured through 'enterprise funding'. A work stream to explore longer-term strategy and the future sustainable funding options will be prioritised over the next 12 months.

PCC also provides support for city marketing and advertising within the existing Economic Development team and revenue budget. A commitment has also been made to maintain this support going forwards at reduced levels to reflect current local authority budget pressures.

Over the past five years, Destination Plymouth Ltd has helped to leverage over £7.7 million income through grants alone for specific projects related to the visitor plan. This includes £1.62 million from Visit England for product development and international marketing activity and £132k for delivery of a 'Green Tourism' scheme from the Community Recovery Fund. In addition, Destination Plymouth has acted as 'lead body' for a £500k 'Data hub' project for Heart of the South West LEP. UK Shared Prosperity funding was secured in 2023 to support activity connected to developing a new Brand strategy for the city.

In 2024 £25,000 was secured as match funding for UKSPF funds from private sector businesses across the city to develop the new brand strategy and narrative. We are very grateful for the support of Babcock, Princess Yachts, University of Plymouth and The Box for providing the funding to enable the strategy to be developed. No further implications are anticipated for the MTFS at this stage, resource implications are limited to member and officer time.

Section 2: No implications identified at this stage of the development plans

Financial Risks**Section 1:**

Current financial risks regarding delivery of the Visitor Plan and Brand strategy are as follows:

Post 2027 funding for Destination Plymouth is not secure.

Opportunities to secure and leverage grant and commercial funding are restrictive due to limited resources, high levels of competitiveness across the city and economic constraints in the business sector. Opportunities for government grant funding are limited currently.

Waterfront Bid renewal due in 2026.

National re-structuring of tourism which has implemented Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEP'S) has also affected Plymouth's ability to draw down funding directly within the wider county context. Currently there is no national funding for LVEP's.

Strategically and linked to Visitor plan objectives - Gap funding for hotel developments from private sector investment is required to address market failure in developments going forwards.

Section 2: – no immediate financial risks

Legal Implications

No legal implications anticipated as a result of this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Section 1: Destination Plymouth Ltd. is accredited to 'Bronze Standard' by the 'Green Tourism' international accreditation scheme. The team are very proud of this achievement which sets standards in line with the UN Sustainability goals. The new Brand strategy for the city has a key strand running through it linked to environment, nature and sustainability.

A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed see link

[Assessment - Climate Impact Assessment Tool](#)

Section 2 - Whilst this report has no identifiable environmental implications, the Culture Plan has the environment as a key driver and will be at the forefront of decision making.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

Section 1:

The Visitor Plan and new Brand strategy include some activities that relate to the following:

Health and safety - Destination Plymouth as a limited company operates to health and safety guidelines as set out in UK Corporate law. Health and Safety is managed through the Peninsular 'Bright' Health and Safety scheme. Where projects are not led by Destination Plymouth, the Board will seek reassurance that the organisation delivering is compliant through their project governance procedure. Risk management – Destination Plymouth runs its own organisational risk process alongside a higher-level strategic risk register for the overarching Visitor Plan and Brand strategies.

Where projects are not directly delivered by Destination Plymouth the Board will seek evidence that they are being risk managed through a formal project governance process. Destination Plymouth also acts as 'secretariat' to the city wide multi agency, Destination Operations group which runs a risk register to mitigate against impacts of large quantities of the general public at peak times across the city.

The new Brand Strategy includes a risk register which will be developed over the next 12 months as delivery plans are created. The delivery plans will also have their own project risk registers as part of the development process.

Equality and inclusion – Successful delivery of the Brand strategy and Visitor Plan should help to attract over 25,000 jobs to the city over 10 years. These jobs will provide employment for the local community across a very broad range of roles and in a very accessible way. Destination Plymouth will review projects and activities in the brand strategy on an individual basis to ensure that they promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

A community wide approach has been taken to the development of the new brand strategy to ensure that it reflects the broader nature of our local community and is reflecting the increasingly diverse nature of our local population and culture.

See Equalities impact statement in separate attachment.

Section 2 - No other implications identified.

**Add rows as required to box below*

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Glenn Caplin Grey											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 27/01/2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Jemima Laing											
Date approved: 25/01/2026											

APPENDIX A.**SECTION 1: CITY BRANDING STRATEGY UPDATE**

2025 has been an incredibly successful year on a number of fronts for Destination Plymouth and the partner organisations we represent:

- Working with partners across the city we have successfully led the re-imagination of the city brand and creation of new Brand Strategy, narratives and visuals for the city.
- Alongside this we have started the transition from a visitor led to a broader city place marketing organisation championing all sectors nationally and internationally.
- Many of the projects in the 2030 Visitor Plan are progressing effectively across all the different projects areas with some fantastic results which we have highlighted in this report.

The brand work was launched in October and landed very well across the city with overall very positive media coverage and responses from businesses and communities.

In the first 8 weeks over 200 people accessed the brand home site for content and 65 the media hub with 164 downloads from the hub. Social media reached over 200,000 views for the initial posting on Facebook and is currently being tracked to see how it develops over time.

The branding content is now being adopted by partners across the city with the most recent example being the use for the launch of the City of Culture 2029 bid early January. In addition, Citybus have supported using the insides of the new electric bus fleet and PCC has used the visuals on the 'Civic' hoardings. Princess yachts recently used film footage in their 60th anniversary film and content, Plymouth Culture used the branding on their new Creative Industries strategy and Plymouth University used it on their recent visioning document at their Civic dinner in November. Babcock were early adopters of the visuals using them for their Devonport open days in July last year.

It seems a priority for the city to now consider how it supports resourcing to positioning itself nationally as a 'must be' place to invest and do business as well as to live, work and visit. Competition is huge nationally with many of the core cities and mayoral authorities pumping millions of funding into driving growth through place marketing. If you look at all their growth strategies place, culture and visitor are right at the heart of their ambitions. Their overarching aim in many cases is to attract talent and investment and similar skills to those which Plymouth requires linked to manufacturing, engineering, science, healthcare, creative digital and so on. The investment is huge.

Now is a time for us to use the strengths of our city and the brand narratives which encapsulate this and really use them to shout about what we have to offer here. So, over the next year we will build on the brand foundations you have all helped us to create and we encourage you all to talk, activate and invest in sharing the positive opportunities Plymouth offers for us all. Let's all 'make life an adventure' in 2026.

1. City branding and positioning:

Since the City Brand Strategy, narratives and visuals were adopted by Plymouth City Council in October 2025 the work has been publicly launched and is now starting to be used by wider city partners, communities and organisations. The work to re-imagine the city brand has been completed over a period of two years including a substantial research piece to understand external perceptions of the city and to identify our unique strengths.

Delivery has included:

- Brand visuals imagery and toolkit [Plymouth: Brand home](#)

120 people have visited the brand home site since launch, viewing over 380 pages

- Web home page imagery [Make life an adventure | Plymouth Britain's Ocean City](#)

This is a consumer facing site which has received 367 visits since October, with 691 page views

- Media hub [Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City](#) - 74 users, 412 downloads
- Webinar attended by 60 representatives of city organisations:
 - Plymouth City Council, Arts University Plymouth, City College Plymouth, University of Plymouth, Theatre Royal Plymouth, Sutton Harbour Group, Screen Devon, Real Ideas Organisation, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, PureServiced / Pureserviced, Babcock International, Princess Yachts, Great Western Railway (GWR), Homes England
- 2,608 volunteer meeting hours — the equivalent of 372 working days invested across partnership
- Over 250 participants engaged in citywide consultation including students and local community groups
- Total LinkedIn engagements in first week: 18,491 impressions, 12,252 likes, 68 comments, 45 reposts
- Facebook film: initial reach in first week over 114,000 views, 1,400 likes, 293 shares

Next steps rolling out and usage:

- Engagement with city organisations and communities
- Alignment of resources to support wider place marketing activity
- Creation of 'soundbytes' linked to key strands of narratives for social media use
- Creation of a new city website as a digital shop window and global showcase
- Securing funding for broader external talent campaign activity

2. Visitor Plan progress report

i. Overview

The current Visitor Plan 2030 is now in its 6th year and has been highly effective in creating strong alignment across the city's supporting partnerships and in delivering several key projects which are cited within it. The plan's objectives are grounded in wise growth of the value of the visitor economy. The focus is on high value markets to drive productivity in the sector that can translate into quality, year-round jobs and opportunities for Plymothians. That means international and overnight leisure and business visitors who will visit throughout the year and manifests in our targets which grow value at a faster rate than volumes of visits. To

Objectives of the plan are to grow visitor number to 6 million by 2030 and visitor spend to £450 million.

The Visitor Plan 2030 strategy has three key themes:

- Blue-green city
- Brilliant Culture and heritage
- Premier Destination

And is underpinned by a series of enabling activities including:

- Partnerships
- People
- Ocean city infrastructure
- Our distinctive brand

The broader visitor economy including tourism and hospitality is one of the largest employment sectors in the South West region and a key employment sector in Plymouth supporting over 6,200 jobs in the city.

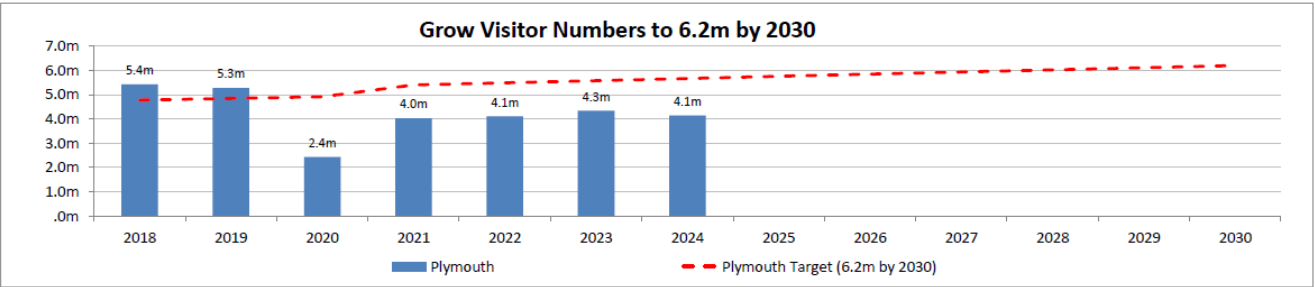
The table below shows the current data for annual visits, visitor spend, and numbers of people employed for the region using 2024 data.

Region	Visitor numbers (annual)	Visitor spend (annual £'s)	Employment (annual)	% of employment
South West	142,342,000	£11,840,925,000	181,500	8%
Cornwall	15,011,000	£1,978,207,000	39,000	14%
Devon	27,050,000	£2,463,281,000	47,100	8%
Plymouth	4,135,000	£346,449,000	6,206	5%

In terms of visitor numbers the sector nationally has not yet fully recovered from the effects of Covid in 2020. Recently released figures from Visit Britain, ONS and IPS data for 2024 show that the region is still under performing versus 2019 in terms of visitor numbers. For example, in Plymouth in 2019 visitors were 5,279,000 versus 4,135,000 in 2024. The same is replicated across Devon, Cornwall and the South West. However, direct spend in Plymouth has improved and has increased to above pre Covid levels at £346,449,000 vs £334,081,000 total spend including secondary impacts is £357,565,000.

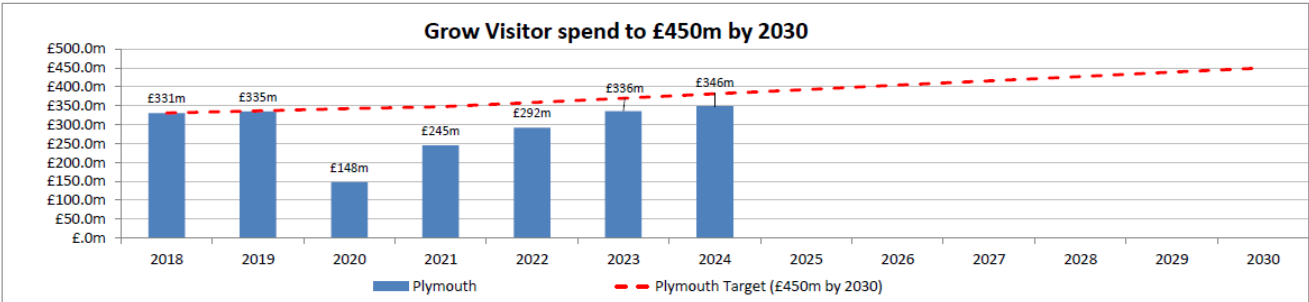
Grow Visitor Numbers to 6.2m by 2030

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Plymouth	5.4m	5.3m	2.4m	4.0m	4.1m	4.3m	4.1m						
Plymouth Target (6.2m by 2030)	4.8m	4.8m	4.9m	5.4m	5.5m	5.6m	5.7m	5.8m	5.8m	5.9m	6.0m	6.1m	6.2m



Grow Visitor SPEND by £450m by 2030

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Plymouth	£330.7m	£334.8m	£148.0m	£244.7m	£292.1m	£335.7m	£346.4m						
Plymouth Target (£450m by 2030)	£330.8m	£336.5m	£342.2m	£347.0m	£358.4m	£369.9m	£381.3m	£392.8m	£404.2m	£415.7m	£427.1m	£438.6m	£450.0m



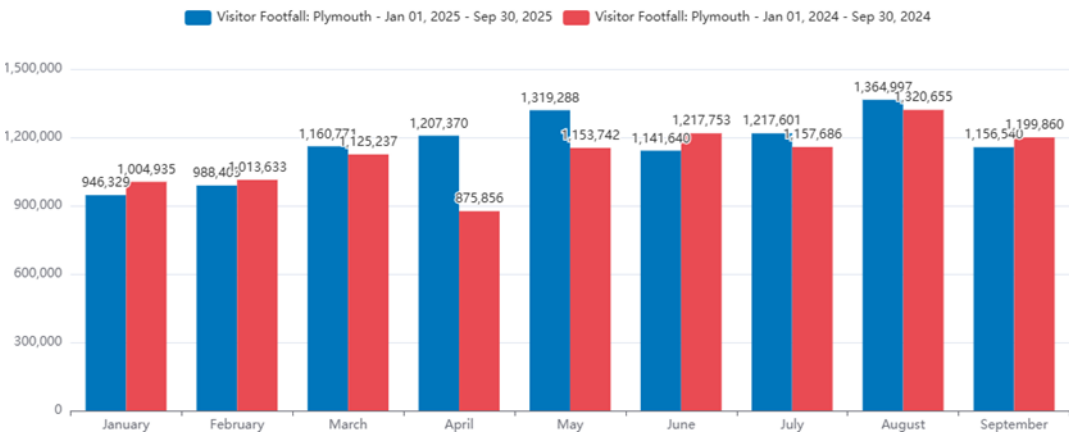
Overall City Footfall numbers: (using BT footfall data from the South West Data Hub)

Visitor Footfall (Jan to Sept 2025 vs Jan to Sept 2024) NB. This is combined visitor and local data

2024: 10,069,357

2025: 10,502,941

Growth of 4.3%



ii. Highlights:

Over the past twelve months since the last report to Scrutiny committee there has been positive progress on a number of the activity strands connected to delivery of the Visitor Plan 2030. The Visitor Plan 2030 is a shared leadership, shared delivery model with multiple organisations across the city leading in key areas. This includes Plymouth City Council, Plymouth City Centre Company BID, Plymouth Waterfront Partnership BID, Plymouth Cruise Partnership, MEET Plymouth, Plymouth Culture and The Box amongst others.

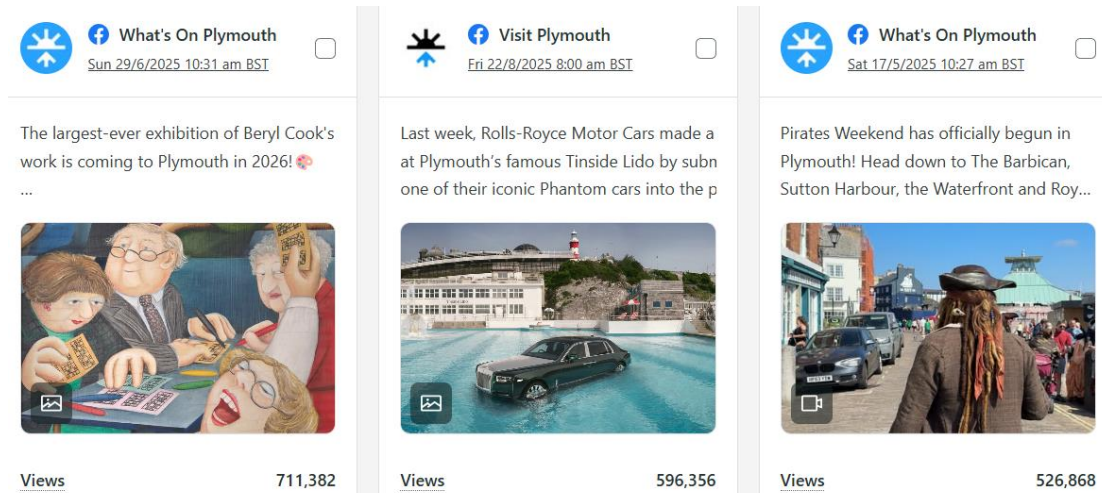
Progress of the Visitor Plan is monitored by an ‘Action Plan’. Currently good progress is being made in relation to the over 20 projects and work streams which are set out in the plan. The plan is reviewed quarterly at Board meetings.

Marketing and place promotion:

Over the past year, the Plymouth City Council marketing team have delivered a proactive, digitally led programme that has grown audiences, deepened engagement, and helped strengthen Plymouth’s position as a vibrant visitor and investment destination.

What we're proud of:

- Growing audiences: Across Visit Plymouth, What's On Plymouth, Invest Plymouth, and Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, our combined social media following passed 160,000 followers, with content being seen over 41 million times – more than double last year's reach.



- High-impact video storytelling: Over 6 million video views and 380 days of total watch time across digital-owned channels, showcasing Plymouth through authentic, visual content that resonates.
- Influencer collaborations: Worked with local creators such as CurlyGaz, whose Plymouth [festive food feature](#) drew strong local engagement with over 180k views, 4.5k likes and 540 comments (including Dawn French) – adding authenticity to our place storytelling.
- Investment brand growth: Invest Plymouth achieved 127% more website users and a 153% rise in social engagements, driving more interest and awareness in the city's economic growth and impact.
- Team Plymouth LinkedIn launch: Since launch in September 2025, generated 80k impressions, a 13.6% engagement rate, and 1,200+ professional followers.
- Plymouth Sound National Marine Park momentum: Social audience grew 15%, and newsletter subscribers nearly doubled (+90%), reflecting growing national interest.

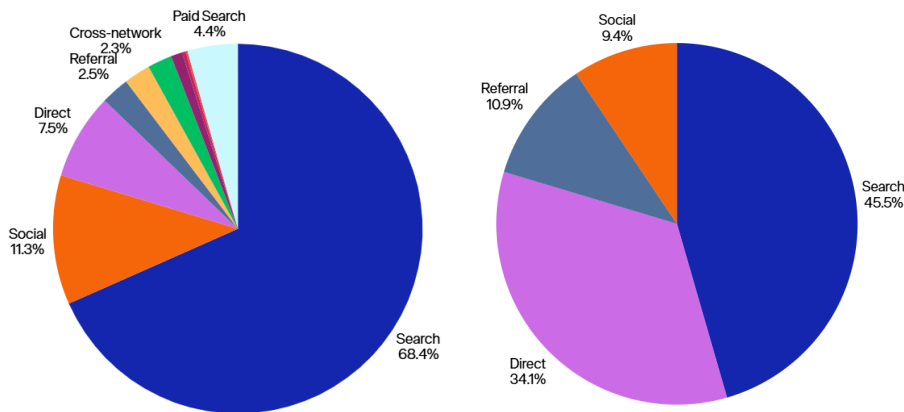
Where we're having impact:

- Driving event audiences: Digital campaigns for PCC's major events delivered 11.7 million impressions and 450k event page views on the website.
- Website activity: Visit Plymouth attracted 700k users and 2 million page views, with top interest in events, attractions, and things to do.
- Email performance: The Visit Plymouth newsletter grew 30% to nearly 20,000 subscribers, while Invest Plymouth maintains a 40% open rate, and Plymouth Sound National Marine Park 35% open rate which is well above the industry average of 21.3%, evidencing that we have a highly engaged and valuable database.

Where we're improving & adding value:

- Higher engagement, fewer posts: Reduced the number of posts on Visit Plymouth by 23%, leading to a 77% rise in total engagements, thanks to stronger strategy and content quality.

- Authentic visual storytelling: Imagery and video now focus on lifestyle, culture, and major city news – building Plymouth’s placemaking identity.
- Building on our user acquisition. Dominant search traffic for Visit Plymouth (68%) aligns with its role in driving broad visitor interest, supported by ongoing SEO efforts like content optimisation for events and heritage. Invest Plymouth’s balanced mix, with stronger direct visits (34%), reflects repeat business users and brand loyalty, but lower search share points to opportunities in sector-specific keywords like marine tech or defence.



Context and challenges:

- Platform shifts: Organic visibility is harder to sustain, increasing reliance on paid activity.
- Tough competition: Regional destinations are investing more in digital, requiring standout content and consistent storytelling.
- Resourcing pressures: Balancing content volume, event responsiveness, and creative quality remains an ongoing challenge, but partnership working is improving capacity.
- Monetisation barriers: Driving income through memberships and digital advertising continues to be challenging. Membership uptake and delivery require significant effort for comparatively low return. Social posts promoting partner deals see limited engagement, and advertising placements, such as newsletter ads, deliver low results.
- Ageing website: With digital discovery increasingly shaped by AI and evolving search behaviour, the Visit Plymouth website performs well but faces the typical challenges of keeping pace with these rapidly changing technologies. This platform is nearly 10 years old now and it is likely it will not be supported for much longer. Work is underway to secure funding to update this digital platform in line with the City Brand Strategy and to create a new website and digital shop window for the city to reflect the changing growth trajectory.

Links:

- Visit Plymouth – [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [TikTok](#)
- What's On Plymouth – [Facebook](#)
- Invest Plymouth – [Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#)
- Plymouth Sound National Marine Park – [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [TikTok](#) | [LinkedIn](#)
- Team Plymouth – [LinkedIn](#)

Summary:

Plymouth’s digital presence is expanding faster than ever, with clear data showing stronger engagement, better alignment between tourism and inward investment messaging, and a visible shift toward

authentic, place-based marketing. These efforts are helping define how people see Plymouth, not just as a destination, but as a connected, confident city with a distinct identity and story to tell.

Events activity:

The PCC events team delivered and supported 43 major events in 2025 attracting 650,000 attendees. We know that our events are driving economic impact. When we look at data from the South West Visitor Economy Hub we can see that the Fireworks Championships drive over an 80% increase in midweek footfall and that both Armed Forces Day and the Xmas light switch on increased footfall by 30% for example.

Armed Forces Day continues to strengthen our partnership with Babcock and the Rehabilitation Triathlon, sponsored by Aecom grew in popularity with more local schools taking part. VE day celebrations on the Hoe showcased archive material from The Box on a big screen alongside music and dancing and had some great South West media coverage.

The team worked hard to lure Red Bull back to Plymouth and their Up The Mast brought 5,000 visitors to The Barbican (and millions across their global channels online) to witness hilarious scenes of local daredevil's running up a slippery mast and falling into the harbour. The event was such a success that Red Bull are bringing it back for 2026 and the team are exploring a number of other sporting opportunities for the city.

Associated British Ports supported The British Firework Championships once again, good weather meant we had an excellent turnout across the waterfront (80% increase on usual midweek footfall according to SW Visitor data hub) and the event was live streamed on YouTube with over 20,000 views across the globe. Care experienced young people were again at the heart of the event with the Young People's Choice award sponsored by Citybus.

The Summer Sessions, in partnership with Live Nation put on four nights of music with headliners Snow Patrol, James, Pendulum and The Corrs. It was a great opportunity to showcase local music talent (such as music ambassador Grace Lightman) and give University of Plymouth and DBS music students the chance for backstage tours and Q+A's with industry experts. Whilst they attracted good crowds with positive audience feedback, Live Nation were disappointed with ticket sales overall and have pulled out of Plymouth, alongside other regional cities next year. From our perspective, the line up wasn't strong enough to justify the ticket prices. The team have plugged this live music gap and will be supporting Liz Hobbs Group (a music promoter from the midlands) to put on 3 nights of (Radio 2 friendly) music in Central Park in 2026.

FlavourFest (City Centre Company) and Seafest (Plymouth Watership Partnership and Plymouth Sound National Marine Park) also drew good crowds and highlighted the thriving food scene in the South West whilst giving other platforms for grassroots music.

We continue to support third parties who contribute to the growing line up of events across the city such as Britain's Ocean City Running Festival, Winter Wonderland, Pride, Race 4 Life and Market Place Europe's Christmas Market.

As part of our on-going commitment to accessibility we have partnered with the Inclusivity Group to provide BSL services for The Armed Forces Day evening concert and The British Firework Championships stage programme. The Events team chair a quarterly Events Inclusion and Access Group comprising of key city partners such as PADAN, Plymouth Argyle, Theatre Royal, The Box, Barbican Theatre and Plymouth Pavilions. The group supports the Council's work to promote equality and celebrate diversity and will help ensure that events across the city are accessible.

National and regional Public Relations activity:

Number of articles sold in - 177

Opportunities to see (OTS) - 2,179,582,264

Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) - £ 53,617,724

Increasingly we have been focusing on 'quality' rather than quantity of information and last year started to focus on a broader 'place based' approach to city PR working with the Brand Development Group. This included some great coverage on 'Women in STEM', Culture and community for example.

MACHINERY

Plymouth champions Women in STEM

Features 3 4 mins read

Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City, celebrates International Women in Engineering Day (IWIED) 2025 with some examples of excellence that are redefining the landscape of historically male-dominated industries.



See engineers working together at modern and connected premises, here (middle right).

Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City - a Top 10 City in the UK for engineering and manufacturing employment - is making waves in the UK's defence and engineering sectors, not just through innovation and critical national capability, but by breaking down barriers for women in traditionally male-dominated industries.

One of the businesses at the heart of this transformation is the defence company **Bobcock International** (Bobcock International). With over 2,000 employees based at **Excessport Naval Dockyard** - home to the UK's only site licensed to undertake full life-cycle submarine maintenance - Bobcock is a powerhouse not just of engineering expertise and technology, but also industry.

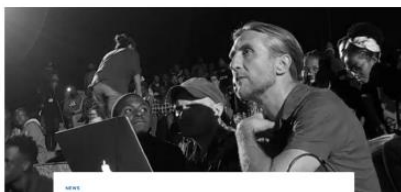
While engineering has historically been a male-dominated profession, Bobcock is redefining the landscape. Women now make up 19% of Bobcock's workforce, a promising increase from last year, with 40% representation at board level and 30% in senior leadership roles. And with a clear target of achieving 30% female representation by 2030, backed into company KPIs, Bobcock is not just talking about change - it's engineering it.

Kerry Corbett, Bobcock's Director of Corporate, commented: "Bobcock has an excellent range of unique career opportunities available for women in roles that help deliver our nation's critical national defence and energy security programmes.

"We are passionate about raising awareness of the amazing opportunities STEM careers can provide and to breaking down barriers or perceptions that prevent women (and others) from experiencing a successful long-term career in defence, and developing the fantastic skills and training they come with."

artsculture

art > society > culture



Sea for Yourself | coastal creativity in Ocean City

By ArtsCulture - June 12, 2023

Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City, is celebrating its evolving cultural scene with a groundbreaking project aiming to create a unique environment in the city, where arts, technology and environment intersect.

Internationally renowned artist and filmmaker, David Cottenell, will create a major new commission for Plymouth as part of "Sea for Yourself" - the city's new ambitious cultural programme that will use art and digital innovation to connect people with the UK's first National Marine Park.

The Sea for Yourself programme - supported by funding from Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund - also aims to further develop the networks, skills and visibility that will establish Plymouth as a leader for coastal creativity with national significance, offering research, training, development and partnership opportunities across disciplines.

4-year programme

The four-year Sea for Yourself programme will use art, storytelling and digital innovation to reconnect people with the ocean. It is linked to Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, which was created to forge a new relationship between the city, its communities and the sea.

David Cottenell, recognised for his visionary public realm and digital work, will develop an exciting new work in Plymouth that will unfold across multiple sites and digital platforms throughout the city.

His past projects include a mysterious 'geyser' in a city suburb, films exploring trauma and memory and a data-driven public sculpture connected to legal recognition of the rights of bodies of water as 'living entities'.

A new type of relationship

David said: "Sea for Yourself is a chance to build a completely new type of relationship between people and the sea.

"I want to create something open and accessible - something that uses animation, gameplay and narrative to help people experience the ocean with awe and urgency. Plymouth is the perfect city to do that."

Hannah Harris, CEO, Plymouth Culture, said: "Sea for Yourself places world-class creativity in direct conversation with Plymouth's people and its ocean landscape. These commissions are a catalyst for the wider programme, which seeks to create opportunities for interdisciplinary work and explore the use of creative and digital interventions to support people's connection to the sea for mutual benefit."

- Innovation (all verticals, including Culture), Community, Brand, Strategy - 47 pieces/OTV 209,812,114/ AVE £5,161,378
- Cruise - 18 pieces/OTV 84,298,345/ AVE £2,073,740
- Groups and MICE - 3 pieces/OTV 322,200/ AVE £ 7,926.



Plymouth Showcases Venues For Business Events

NEWS | UK

REPORTED - NEW CENTRAL TEAM



Plymouth, known as Britain's Ocean City, is set to host its annual Meet Plymouth Showcase on 3 February 2026 at Home Park Stadium, the home of Plymouth Argyle Football Club. The event will spotlight the city's growing reputation as a premier destination for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE).

The showcase will feature over 25 venues, hotels, and event suppliers, offering attendees a comprehensive view of Plymouth's event potential. Notable venues include The Box, the grade-II listed Tinsley Lido, and the Plymouth Pavilions, which is expanding its venue hire offerings. New additions such as Gidleigh Park, a luxury country house hotel with Michelin-starred dining, and Plymouth Boat Trips' latest vessel, 'The Legend of Plymouth', will also be on display.

Amanda Lumley, CEO of Destination Plymouth, emphasised the city's unique position between a National Park and a National Marine Park, stating, "Plymouth finds itself immersed in the natural beauty of a dramatic coastline, and it's a destination perfect for team-building and outdoor corporate activities."

The event aims to attract local, regional, and national businesses, providing them with the opportunity to connect with Plymouth's MICE community. Attendees can explore a variety of offerings, from upscale coastal hotels to unique visitor attractions and teambuilding activities.



For more information and to secure free tickets, interested parties can visit the official event page. The showcase promises to further cement Plymouth's status as a competitive choice for organisations seeking memorable meeting environments.

Below are some of the press coverage we received from Conde Naste and Traveller:

LIFESTYLE > TRAVEL

How To Spend The Perfect Weekend In Plymouth

Our guide to the best hotels, restaurants, and things to do in Plymouth—from manor house stays to England’s oldest gin distillery.

By **Lewis Nunn**, Contributor.  Lewis Nunn is a Senior Travel Editor...  [Follow Author](#)

Published Mar 09, 2025, 09:35am EDT, Updated Aug 24, 2025, 12:21pm EDT

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Coastline by Plymouth to Drake's Island in Devon
GETTY

Nicknamed ‘Britain’s Ocean City’—*Plymouth* is a bustling, salt-sprayed port city sandwiched between England’s spectacular South West coastline and the wild *Dartmoor National Park*. It is steeped in rich nautical history, from *Sir Francis Drake* and the Spanish Armada to the



TRAVEL ARTICLES ▾ REVIEWS ▾ FESTIVALS AND EVENTS ▾ NEWS ▾ FOOD + DRINK ▾ TRAVEL ADS

Walking the South West Coast Path around Plymouth, UK

The South West Coast Path runs through Plymouth and it makes a good base for walking the sections on either side.
by Rupert Parker | Jul 9, 2025



At the heart of the city's extraordinary landscape, and providing a connection between the two national parks, is the South West Coast Path National Trail. This 630-mile coastal footpath directly crosses the city and, from Plymouth Hoe, extends across the Southwest of England.



International and UK domestic trade activity:**International:**

This year focus has been very much on UK domestic trade activity. Marketing budgets have been significantly lower than 2023 so international activity has focused on e-mail activity into our current database of buyers and PR activity. The exception to this is Britain and Ireland marketplace which was held on 24th January 2025. BIM is an annual B2B workshop, organised by the European Tourism Association (ETOA) to showcase Great Britain and Ireland to tour operators and travel buyers from around the world. It involved a series of pre-scheduled, one-to-one appointments – providing a valuable opportunity for us to meet, and do business with, the 200 international travel buyers in attendance. We had 36 appointments and great interest in travel trade accommodation and the National Marine Park. Focus is still very much on Mayflower for the US market and new itinerary ideas.

UK trade activity has focused on the following:

British Travel Trade Show – 22nd/23rd March 2025. This is the UK's largest trade show held at the NEC in Birmingham. Tour operators, Coach Operators, Group Travel Organisers, Travel Agents and wholesalers visit the British Tourism & Travel Show each year. They attend to get ideas for group trips, tours and itineraries, to find products and services that make planning simple, and to make their customers' experiences exceptional. We had 5 stand partners who supported us on the stand – Plymouth Boat Trips, Visit Tamar Valley, The Box, Leonardo Hotels and St Mellion Resort.

We are continuing to work on the new Travel Trade area of the visitplymouth website and add new content. In addition, we are helping members to develop new products for the Travel Trade and visiting members to talk about travel trade activities. We have been cleaning our trade database which has 1200 members. We have Created a new Travel Trade pdf for potential buyers and tour operators as well as a heritage itinerary especially for the international and groups trade. We also joined the CTA - Coach Tourism Association with the aim of attracting more coaches and groups business to the city. A new 'Hidden Heritage' itinerary was created for the groups and trade. This year we have also launched a new Travel Trade Campaign for members to buy in which includes all the above e activities. We have seen a growth this year in members buying into Group and Travel Trade Activity.

MEET Plymouth conferences, meetings and events activity:

The Meet Plymouth Showcase event was hosted on 23rd January 2025 at PAFC – 32 stands and 65 delegates attended and over 150 local businesses were invited. We also partnered with the Devon Chamber of Commerce to help engage with more Devon based businesses.

We continued our membership of the Meetings Industry Association (MIA) and have been attending Destination Web Seminars and Pop-Up Discussions as well as making use of the free training sessions for the team. We attended the summer MIA Connect Day and hosted a training workshop with our members after to share the learning about RFP's and Hosting Agents – 8 members attended.

Working the current Meet Plymouth database and regular newsletters are being sent out and a new 'local buyers' database has been created.

Work has been delivered on the Meet Plymouth website, content has been updated, offers being obtained and blog posts going out monthly. We are now seeing more frequent conference enquires coming in as a result.

A new Instagram account has been created, and we are encouraging members to share content on this channel.

121 meetings with Meet Plymouth members took place over the 12 month period to help them create new product and offers

Work on the next Meet Plymouth Venue Showcase – 3rd Feb at PAFC - 33 stands and 65 delegates signed up to date).

Working with the SW Data Hub we have created a conference data tool as part of the app. Currently we are encouraging members to sign up and load their data so we can track conferences 'real time' and see forward bookings.

Cruise Partnership activity:

2025 has been the best season to date with 15 ships visiting in total and over 15,000 passengers and crew. Bookings are currently good for 2026 and being placed up to 2029. The Cruise Ambassador volunteers have done a fantastic job welcoming cruise guests to the city and are to be congratulated for their amazing work. A huge thank you to partners Plymouth Waterfront Partnership and City Centre Company BIDS, Cattewater Harbour Commissioners, AB Ports and Citybus who have all contributed to growing cruise business for the city.

Marketing activity has been focused in 2025 around Sea Trade global in Miami in April, Sea Trade Europe in Hamburg in September and the Cruise Britain Winter meeting in December. Good progress has been made in arranging familiarisation visits for cruise buyers and also a bid has been put in to host the Cruise Britain Summer event in June 2026

Membership engagement:

We currently have 49 paying members of Destination Plymouth contributing to £33,152 (Jan to Dec 2025) membership income annually. In addition, all 1600 members of the City Centre and Waterfront Business Improvement Districts are entitled to free membership benefits free as part of their BID levy contribution.

We have regular buy-in opportunities as part of our 'always on' marketing activity, generating an additional £4,033.00 Jan 25 - Dec 25.

We host regular membership meetings with our partner venues and suppliers and update them on activity. 121 members meeting also take place face to face, held with 2-3 members a week. Meet Plymouth activities are supported and attended, including 3 member meetings in 2025. Attention is continually being paid to grow our LinkedIn channel, which has 2,209 followers, and our bi-weekly e-newsletter, which has 702 subscribers.

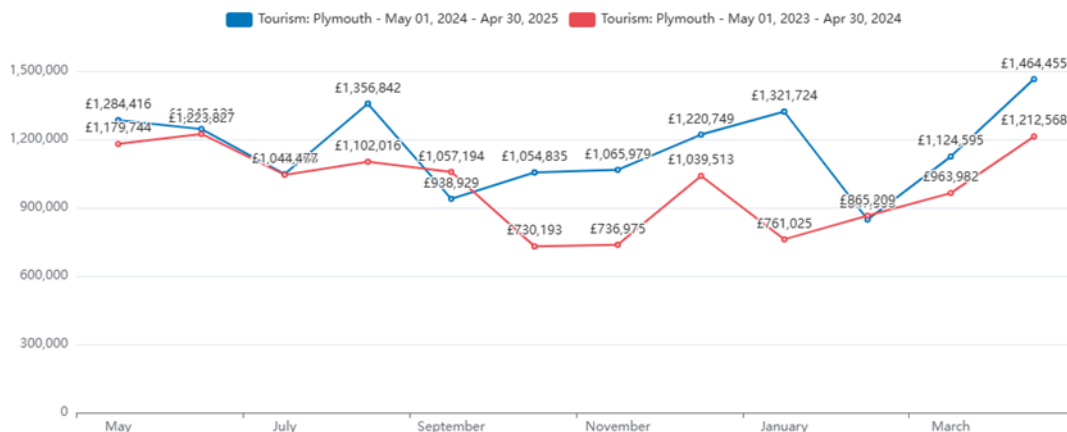
Projects:

South West Data hub is actively up and running and has completed its first year of operation across Devon and Somerset. The £500,000 LEP funded hub is now commercially supported by all the Local Authorities across Devon and Cornwall as well as many tourism organisations. It is providing daily, weekly and monthly data to enable us to understand how many people are visiting the city, why they are coming, how much they are spending, how long they are staying and where they are visiting. Below is some year on year data which has been pulled from the hub in sample format to demonstrate year on year activity. The two business improvement districts and a number of other key city partners already subscribe to the hub and receive monthly reports to help them to calculate return on investment for event and marketing activity and understand consumer and visitor dynamics in the city in more detail. Examples of data sets are given below.

Visitor Spend (May 2024 to April 2025 vs May 2023 to April 2024) - Tourism

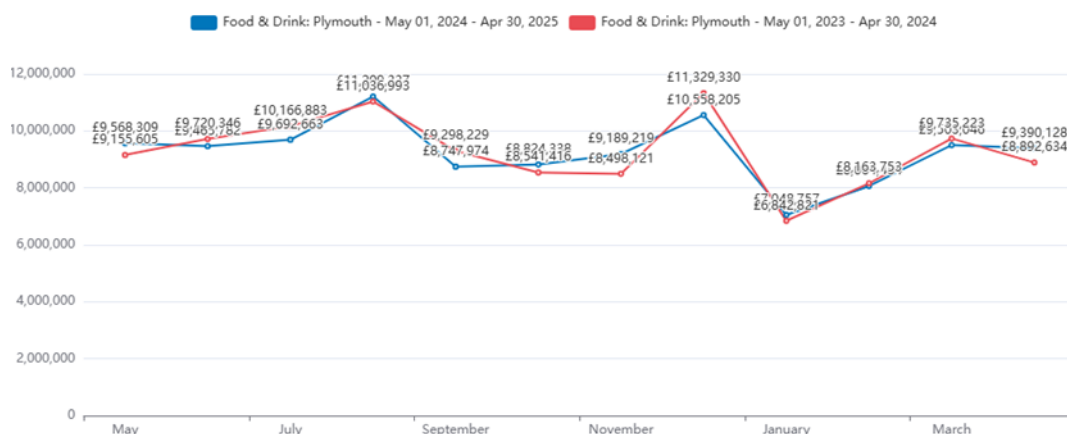
(Tourism includes, transport, holidays and hotels)

2024/25: £13,972,551, 2023/24: £11,916,723, Growth: 17.25%



Food & Drink - (May 2024 to April 2025 vs May 2023 to April 2024)

2024/25: £111,262,242, 2023/24: £104,545,375, Growth: 6.4%



Skills and employment:

There are skills and employment challenges across the city. Along with many other sectors including health, adult social care and transport the tourism, retail and hospitality sector is also still having a problem recruiting staff. This has led to many businesses running at lower capacity levels and reduced service capability. It is fair to say that this is not just a Plymouth problem it continues to be a national issue.

There is some positive news, however, here in the city. Destination Plymouth and the Employment and Skills team at PCC have been exploring the challenges further along with a sector-based task group over the last two years have been trying to address the issues. In the short term DWP funded a development manager to support the sector. This role has significantly increase engagement among young people and the local community to support people into jobs in the sector in a similar way to the 'Building Plymouth' model. Within the initial 18 months contract, the Visitor Economy Coordinator exceeded expectations of the Department for Work and Pensions. Key statistics are below:

Of the 432 individuals supported to date (at 31/07/2025), 357 have been claimants (compared to 200 target), and a further 75 non-claimants have received 1:1 help, preventing the need to claim Universal Credit. This contract delivered positive outcomes for 61% hard of all claimants supported, with 240% (168 compared to a target of 70) of the target number of individuals progressing into employment (or increasing their hours). Similarly, 153% (92 compared to a target of 60) of the target number supported went into training, education and volunteering, therefore exceeding the contract targets for both into employment (35%, 70 individuals) and into education, volunteering and training (30%, 60 individuals)

outcomes. Including social justice outcomes, there were positive outcomes for 76% of claimants supported. Taken as a percentage of the total number of individuals engaged (claimants and non-claimants – including those who didn't engage), 46% achieved an employment outcome and 25% went into training, education and volunteering outcomes.

Since August the contract has been extended through further DWP funding with the following outcomes:

06 eligible DWP claimants have engaged to date, of those 5 claimants have already been supported to transition into employment and a further 6 claimants are in volunteering, training and/ or education. All 106 claimants have received/ are undertaking social justice interventions (defined as careers and pre-employability support/ financial, mental health support/ into work experience), with the Skills and Workforce Coordinator (Rhianne Greaves) continuing to work closely with this remaining caseload to support transitions towards employment in the visitor economy.

Plans ahead include encouraging these individuals to take part in English Tourism Week's 'Behind the Scenes Insight Programme' being organised for March 2026 and also participating in dedicated employer and training provider sessions, alongside the wider Skills Launchpad Plymouth 'Launch 2026 by Connecting to Work' programme underway at Cobourg House throughout January.

Partner led projects highlighted within the activity plan which are moving forwards at pace include:

- Horizons Project led by Plymouth City Council which has nearly completed year 1 of the delivery phase. Capital projects linked to this include Tinside Lido which is on schedule to be completed early 2025.
- Funding of £700k has been secured successfully by Plymouth Culture and the Horizons project to develop a 'digital' park (Ses for yourself' which commenced early 2025.
- Plymouth Cruise and ferry port development in partnership with ABP and Plymouth City Council has also moved ahead successfully, and initial works including a new passenger gantry and refurbishment of the ferry terminal are completed with shore power facilities expected to be up and running by the end of 2026.

iii. Challenges:

Local businesses:

Over the past five years post and despite Covid 19 business growth in the visitor economy has been positive with 11% growth in businesses overall between 2021 and 2025, this is much higher than the regional and national average which is 7.1% and 7.7% respectively. Over the ten year period between 2015 and 2025 growth overall has been 13.1% which is slightly lower than the South West region at 14.1% and nationally at 19.9%

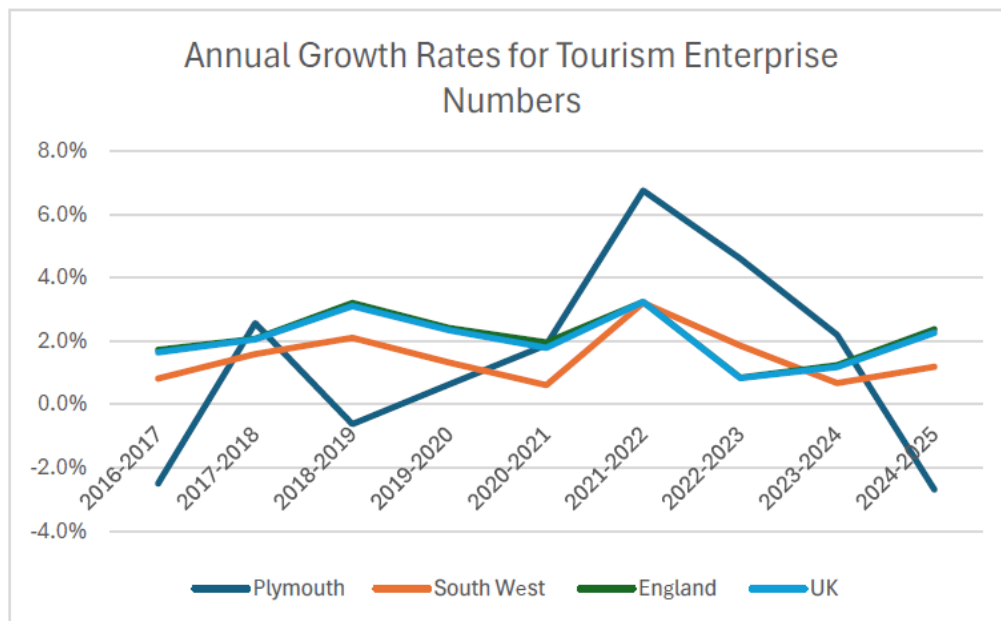
The business climate for the sector remains challenging with multiple impacts affecting trading and bottom line profits including:

- Increased costs of energy, food and supplies with inflation continuing to stay high particularly in the food supply chain.
- Increased employer costs including national living wage and national insurance threshold changes.
- A reduction in the number of visitors taking holidays in the UK due to inflationary pressures on cost of living generally.
- A reduction in the amount that people are spending overall with the subsequent loss of income.

- Competition for recruitment across the city.
- In the short term let's sector businesses have been impacted by changes in fire regulations and the abolition of 'Furnished holiday lets' tax relief.

These factors continue to cause impacts to the businesses within the sector and across the supply chain. Many businesses have been affected by the rising NI payments required post April 2025 and there are high levels of anxiety for many as to whether they will be able to continue trading.

Given the ongoing challenge for businesses in terms of profitability it is likely many will continue to see reduced opening hours over the winter months and in some cases businesses may 'mothball' until spring. Restaurants, wet led beverage businesses including pubs and short term rentals seem to be the worst hit with 25 businesses closing between 2024 and 2025.



Destination Marketing Organisations and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships:

In addition to the challenges facing businesses local tourism organisations including DMO's and Local Visitor economy Partnerships are also declining due to reduced local authority spending, lack of commercial income due to cost pressures on businesses and almost no government grant funding identified to drive growth in the sector. This has led to reduced marketing activity at a time when businesses most need it and, in some cases, the total demise of local DMO's including but not limited to Cornwall, Visit Kent, Visit Dorset, Visit Hampshire and Visit Lincolnshire.

A recent survey conducted by Destination Plymouth on behalf of the Great South West Tourism Partnership showed that over half of the DMO's and Local Authority Tourism teams are funded by UK Shared Prosperity Funding which ceases end of March 2026. There is currently no solution to replace this funding which will mean even less support for businesses on the ground. Destination Plymouth is not immune to this and has no funding solution post 2027 currently.

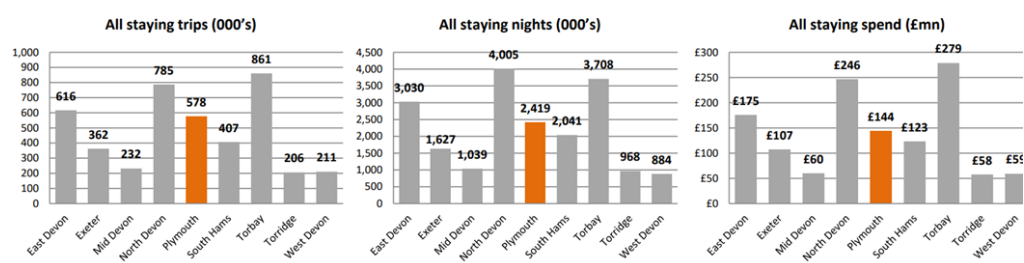
A wider more national impact connected to this is that market share is increasingly being drawn to the North West and North East and away from the South West. Historically the South West was the number one UK domestic tourism market outside of London it has now slipped to fourth place.

Wider city challenges:

Accommodation in the city:

Currently the city has insufficient accommodation for a similar city of its size per capita. This has been a challenge for the last decade, however, is increasingly exacerbated through the requirement of growing businesses sectors in the city which require accommodation and venues for business including, recruitment, training, conferences and meetings. Although there have been some developments going ‘live’ in the city during the past three years and there has been great success with the opening of Premier Inn, Oyo and ‘Moxy’ in 2024 Plymouth is still underperforming in relation to its nearby competitors and as a city nationally. The chart below based on 2023 data shows how we compare to other destinations in the county and particularly noticeable is that Torbay and North Devon have significantly more overnight stays and therefore spend. This is due to the high volume of self-catering and holiday park capacity in North Devon and the much higher level of serviced accommodation for Torbay which has over 4,000 serviced rooms compared to Plymouth at just over 2,000.

Plymouth - Staying visits in the county context



Area	Domestic trips (000's)	Overseas trips (000's)	Domestic nights (000's)	Overseas nights (000's)	Domestic spend (millions)	Overseas spend (millions)
East Devon	574	42	2,695	335	£154	£21
Exeter	316	46	1,057	570	£67	£40
Mid-Devon	212	20	897	142	£51	£9
North Devon	733	52	3,660	345	£220	£26
Plymouth	510	68	1,750	669	£100	£44
South Hams	374	33	1,781	260	£106	£18
Torbay	781	80	3,203	505	£236	£43
Torridge	188	18	832	136	£49	£9
West Devon	190	21	741	143	£49	£11

Without further accommodation capacity there is a very high risk that growth targets will not be met by 2030. Currently 87% of the visitor economy is lower spending day visitors (average spend approx. £54 per visit) compared with much higher spending UK and International overnight staying visitors (average spend £207 and £720 per visit respectively.) In addition, data shows that the ‘seasonality’ of the city is flattening out with much higher occupancies ‘off peak’ than previously. This is positive from an investment perspective and is being driven significantly by the business sector.

Clearly there is a great opportunity here to significantly grow the visitor economy as well as increase GVA through higher spending staying visitors. A focus on hotel development will also support the forthcoming ‘Team Plymouth’ activity, Devonport development and support growing businesses across the city.

Short term rental accommodation is also facing challenges which are impacting on supply of Air BnB and licensed short term rental operators. This includes new fire regulations, the new short term lets registration scheme and multiple other factors (see schematic from Professional Association of Self

Caterers). This has seen numbers drop from 769 in 2021 to under 500 active listings in 2024 which contributes towards the loss of bed stock and accommodation capacity in the city.



Factors affecting Destination Plymouth delivery:

Reduced capacity of Destination Plymouth and future funding:

Destination Plymouth currently employs 3 full time staff and hosts the National Marine Park (NMP) CEO. In addition, the organisation contracts additional support from two contractors for specialist work including cruise and travel trade/ (MEET Plymouth) conference activity. The two contracted staff and one of the permanent staff are self-financing through the Destination Plymouth Membership scheme, Cruise and Conference partnerships and the NMP CEO is funded through Mayflower legacy and Horizon project funds until 2026 at which point it is anticipated that alternative funding will be secured.

Funding was reduced in 2023 by £100,000 per annum, however, UK Shared Prosperity Funding has been secured until March 2027 which will keep Destination Plymouth viable until then. Resources remain tight and a longer-term funding strategy is currently being discussed to see what options available are.

SECTION 2 – Culture Plan Update

1.0 Context

The Culture Plan (https://plymouthculture.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Plymouth-Culture-Strategy_REV_P08_fulldraft.pdf) was adopted by PCC in March 2021 and published in May 2021. This strategic plan, and those that have come before it, have successfully steered the growth and development of the cultural sector over the last 10-15 years.

Against a backdrop of funding cuts Plymouth has maintained its investment from Arts Council England, seeing 8 organisations share £4.1m per year, an investment of £12.34m over the three-year contract.

In 2024 PCC asked Plymouth Culture to commission a Creative Industries Plan, acknowledging that culture is connected but distinct from the creative industries, and just one part of the wider creative economy. This plan was published in May 2025 and launched at a Roundtable event in Westminster in November 2025 (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6690e58861d9417a21427245/t/6911ac93e95f980a16a46eaf/1762765971607/Creative+Industries+Plan+2025.pdf>)

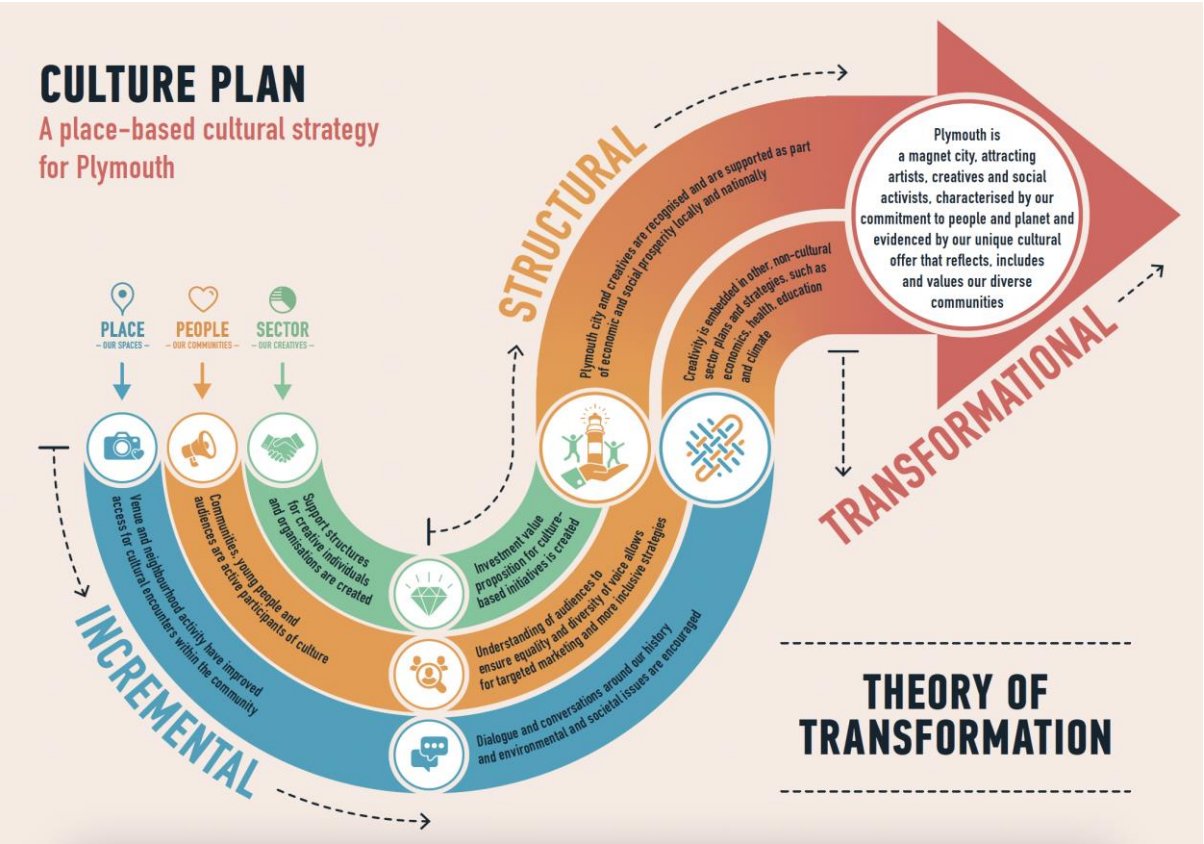
These plans outline the creative and cultural ambitions of the city and set out key priorities for implementation. Both plans work on a distributed model, whereby the responsibility for delivery does not sit solely with Plymouth Culture but across a partnership of organisations.

2.0 Culture Plan Ambitions

The Culture Plan does not list projects but rather focuses on creating the conditions needed for culture to thrive in the city. In particular, the plan speaks of the need for connection and alignment with wider city agendas so that investment can be unlocked and the role of Culture in supporting the city ambition is clearly understood and valued.

Following the publication of the Culture Plan Plymouth Culture developed a Theory of Transformation model (Table 1). This acknowledges that the delivery of the Culture Plan does not sit with one organisation but within and across an ecology. It also acknowledges that to realise the scale of the cultural ambition we need to move beyond project delivery to system and policy change. The following report shares some highlights of activity that are operating specifically within the strategic space to achieve long-term, sustainable change.

Table 1 – Culture Plan Theory of Transformation



3.0 Sea for yourself

Sea for Yourself is a creative collaboration inviting everyone to connect with our greatest natural asset, Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.

The programme seeks to celebrate Plymouth as a city defined by the sea, powered by creativity, and reimagining what a coastal community can be.

It uses creativity to reshape how we understand, celebrate, and protect our marine environment for generations to come, making the sea accessible to all through shared digital and cultural experiences.

Importantly it positions creativity as a catalyst for economic, social and environmental change; reaffirming Plymouth as a city where creative talent thrives in collaboration with scientists and technologists, and where our marine identity drives innovation, wellbeing and sustainable growth in every neighbourhood.

The four-year long programme is comprised of a commissioning programme, commissioning creative and digital interventions from artists, a data insights strand and a talent development programme. The programme delivers the 'Digital Park' element of the wider PSNMP Horizons programme led by PCC and is funded by NHLF and Arts Council England Place Partnership.

Sea for Yourself is an example of how we are working to position culture as a driver for change working across sectors, in this instance connecting culture, communities and nature. It directly responds to the PSNMP's ambition to reconnect citizens to the sea by building on the Marine Citizen model and research connecting place-based attachment to better economic and social outcomes.¹

3.1 Commissioning Programme

[David Cotterrell](#) is the first commissioned artist developing work entitled *Intertidal*. Inspired by the porous, dynamic and shifting relationship between city and sea, Intertidal will make the movement of water in/out/under the city visible and felt within daily urban rhythms. The work will comprise of the following and will show April-May 2026:

- Public realm interventions using water/light/sound
- A distributed screen-based work
- Venue-based presentation and engagement programme

The second commission worked with a community panel to select artists Hanna Kubutat-Byrne and Leila Gamaz. They set out a clear but flexible proposal for a digital 'patchwork' that will invite creative input from a range of communities in both analogue and digital forms. Physical and digital outputs will emerge from the engagement activity and will be visible before the end of 2026.

Four further micro-commissions have been awarded to artists as part of a residency programme creating opportunity for community storytelling and uncovering people's connection to the sea.

- Megan Roberts' 360 Immersive Film 'And Breathe' is showing at Real Ideas Market Hall from 19 January 2026.
- Let's Sea Your Tatts will be presented at Grow Studios from 27 February 2026.
- Agnieszka Blonska and Tori Cannell's outdoor audio work, made in collaboration with 'migrant mothers' will be presented in July 2026.
- A project drawing on the history of Mountbatten by Kayla Parker and Stuart Moore will be presented in the interpretation space at the Mountbatten Centre from June 2026.

3.2 Data Programme – Cultural Index

We have commissioned the Social Research Unit (SRU) at University of Plymouth to review and revise the Cultural Index. First published in 2017 but never implemented, this will provide a baseline for the cultural health of our city and a blueprint for other cities to use. This is working hand-in-hand with data infrastructure developments that will better facilitate the collation of cultural data so that we can monitor audience behaviour and develop data-led insights which will inform more targeted audience development strategies.

4.0 Creative Industries

The Creative Industries Plan was adopted by PCC in May 2025 and made five key recommendations to build on the strengths within the city and identified opportunities:

- Embed the creative industries in all council policy areas.
- Designate culture and creative clusters (CCCs) around existing anchor organisations as the primary mechanism for partners to deliver business support services, to stimulate clustering and neighbourhood

¹ <https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/376324/1/376324.pdf>

regeneration and make Plymouth's creative identity more visible.

- The initial CCCs should be –
 - Culture Cluster around The Box, Arts University and University of Plymouth
 - Createch Cluster focusing on a screen and immersive training cluster around the Market Hall focused on collaboration with the marine, defence and health sectors
 - Production Park with the opportunity to increase capacity at Theatre Royal's TR2 production base and build a supply chain in close proximity with a view to developing a production park
 - Performance Cluster around TRP, extending from the Guildhall to the Millennium building supporting the Evening and Night Time offer in the city centre.
- Nurture regional and national partnerships to attract investment and deliver the business support.
- Build a pipeline of creative businesses by providing support and investment mechanisms for creative businesses at each stage of their growth.
- Stimulate the tech sector with mechanisms including early-stage investment to double the number of businesses and IT professionals in Plymouth over the next 10 years and stimulate R&D collaborations with other sectors.

In line with the implementation plan set out in the document, the University of Plymouth are working with a consortium of Universities across the South West to develop a submission for the AHRC Creative Clusters Fund².

5.0 Creative Defence Collaboration

In November 2025 Plymouth Culture alongside PCC and cultural partners from the city hosted a Roundtable discussion in Westminster. The event was chaired by Caroline Norbury, CEO Creative UK, and attended by representatives from ACE, DCMS, MHCLG, Homes England, DBTI, AHRC, RSA. The event saw the launch of the Creative Industries Plan and was an opportunity to open discussion about the role of culture and creative industries within the defence-driven growth agenda.

We put the case forward that Plymouth's ambition for Defence driven growth is a once in a generation opportunity to deliver unprecedented regional transformation, but that the creative and cultural sectors are a critical component in ensuring this investment achieves genuinely inclusive growth, where innovation is prioritised to transform the fortunes of residents across the city and wider region, now and in the future. The spillover and multiplier attributes of the creative and cultural sector mean that investment in the creative economy is an investment in an inclusive economy. Plymouth's unique creative and cultural assets, situated alongside His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Devonport, have the potential to achieve long-term transformation through purposeful investment in a creative defence collaboration of national importance and global significance.

What, to some, might seem an unlikely partnership across sectors, is in fact a unique opportunity and has the potential to set Plymouth apart on the national/global stage. Defence, culture and creativity can be complementary, and the creative economy should be a core component of the city strategy to support the ambitions for innovation, inclusive growth, cultural regeneration, and a resilient economy and workforce.

The discussion focused on how the Creative and Cultural sector can contribute significantly to two broad programmes of work aligned to Plymouth's growth agenda, and in turn the national growth agenda; 1) business & innovation and 2) cultural placemaking.

² <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/creative-industries-clusters-round-two-outline-stage/>

There was strong agreement in the room and a desire to work together to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would continue to take this work forward.

6.0 UK City of Culture 2029

On the 12th January 2026 Plymouth formally announced its intention to bid for UK City of Culture 2029. The response has been overwhelmingly positive from partners, stakeholders and communities across Plymouth, with many actively supporting the bid.

As in previous years the process involves several stages including an Expression of Interest, longlisting with an invitation to full application and shortlisting. Unlike other years, this time there is £10m prize money guaranteed for the winner, with a £125k resource grant for up to three runners up. There is also a £60k development grant available for up to eight longlisted places to support the costs of developing a full application.

Applications are judged by an independent panel against the criteria published by DCMS. Previous winners have included [Derry/Londonderry](#), [Hull](#), [Coventry](#) and Bradford.

6.1 Rationale for Bidding

Careful consideration was given to the benefits and risks of bidding and overall it was agreed that:

- The timing and context of the city right now is a critical factor and makes it a 'now or never' moment. The Team Plymouth inclusive growth agenda, city centre development and National Marine Park provide a backdrop for which culture-led transformation is a common thread and connecting force. The cultural offer, through a city of culture programme, provides the content needed to engage communities, build civic pride, reimagine coastal futures and attract people to live and work in Plymouth.
- Being a serious contender in the competition shows Plymouth's level of cultural ambition. It mirrors the ambition shown for Team Plymouth and New Towns and positions Plymouth, once again, as a leading force for change nationally and globally.
- A significant proportion of the criteria is concerned with deliverability and we can demonstrate the existence of cultural infrastructure, built over many years through our commitment to culture driven transformation, meaning we are equipped to deliver high quality partnerships and art. The alignment with other investment into the city will be seen as an advantage.
- There has never been a South West winner (Cornwall were longlisted and Southampton shortlisted for 2025) and with Plymouth currently positioned as the urban capital for the region we can clearly demonstrate impact beyond the city.
- The work already started by Plymouth Culture and cultural partners to position a creative X defence conversation with key national partners provides a good foundation to build support and visibility for the bid.
- Evidence suggests there are benefits to bidding even if you don't ultimately win the competition. We all acknowledge the importance of cultural placemaking within the Team Plymouth and City Centre growth agendas and the UK City of Culture competition provides a framework to articulate the role and value of culture in a way that will impact positively on communities, the sector and partners even if we don't win.
- Similarly, the UK City of Culture model is well understood in and beyond the sector so it is likely to be better received than other initiatives.
- This is an opportunity for those communities and areas of the city who may feel neglected or left behind to benefit from investment and cultural programming eg the north of the city.
- The UK City of Culture bid represents a clear next step on the cultural journey of the city and is a mechanism for delivering the Culture Plan objectives whilst amplifying wider city agendas.

6.1 Benefits of bidding

Evaluation reports have been developed to show the impact of winning³ and the impact of the bidding process alone for unsuccessful cities⁴. Impact and legacy are clearly evident in terms of cultural infrastructure, tourism, economic outputs, profile and reputation, educational attainment, health and wellbeing gains, civic pride and community participation. Some of the benefits of the City of Culture title are reported to include:

- Additional investment of over £1 billion which can be linked to the title into the local economies of the host cities, with roughly 25% of that investment coming from the private sector demonstrating that the UK City of Culture attracts additional investment.
- Over 3,800 events and activities have made up the respective programmes of the titleholders.
- Based on evaluation data, it is estimated that 539,209 citizens from host cities have engaged and participated with the UK City of Culture (UK CoC) programme. In addition, an estimated 2 million visitors from across the UK and further afield visited host cities for events and activities.
- Across the three titleholders, a cumulative media value/advertising equivalent value of £596 million has been generated, celebrating the unique cultural and heritage identity of the titleholder, and contributing to the UK's soft power.
- Economic impact for host cities included:
 - Within Derry/Londonderry – 2,740 additional full time equivalent (FTE) job years created, leading to £97.1m in GVA (constant 2010 prices). The 535,500 additional visitors over the year spent £25.2m.
 - Within Hull – tourist visits to Hull increased by 9.7% in 2017 compared with 2016, reaching 6.2 million visits. Jobs in the visitor economy grew by over 27% between 2012 and 2017, increasing from 5,297 to 6,735. The broader creative industries sector, including the cultural sector, experienced steady growth, with employment rising from 1,850 jobs in 2015 to 2,135 jobs in 2017, amounting to a 15.4% increase.
 - Within Coventry – there was £20.9m (at 2023/24 prices) net additional off-site and organisational expenditure in Coventry and Warwickshire, 225 1-year net additional FTE jobs from off-site visitor and organisational expenditure in Coventry and Warwickshire, and, £11.6m net additional GVA (at 2023/24 prices) arising from this expenditure in Coventry and Warwickshire.
- Over £100 million in additional GVA across two of the titleholders to date (Derry/Londonderry and Coventry).
- Tourism within host cities has increased by an average of 22% across the point of bidding and delivery.
- Taking into account standard growth patterns in tourism for each host location, it is estimated that the UK CoC title has led to an additional 3,100 jobs within the tourism and hospitality sectors of host cities.
- The cultural infrastructure within host cities has been left more secure because of the title:
 - Between the 2018-2022 and 2023-2026 funding rounds for Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisations (NPO), there was an increase of 35.7% in funding for organisations in Hull.
 - In Coventry the increase in funding between NPO rounds was 79.3% with organisations in both cities having benefitted from the increased partnerships and opportunities the title brought.
 - Both figures are significantly higher than the 24.6% increase in the annual cash sums invested across the 25 Key Cities in England in 2023-2026 compared with the previous NPO round.
- Education programmes in both Hull and Coventry have engaged more than 200 schools, which have benefitted from outreach work and taking part in projects initiated as a result of the UK CoC.
- Based on evaluation data, it is estimated that over 10,000 school children have benefitted from projects and events that were part of the UK CoC programmes.
- An estimated 7,500 volunteers have been trained due to the UK City of Culture programme, and they have given just over 374,000 volunteer hours. These volunteers have developed new skills, improved their levels of subjective wellbeing, and improved their social connections.
- 90% of volunteers feel a sense of pride or belonging to where they live – significantly higher than the general population.
- 70% or more of citizens/attendees feel a greater sense of pride from living in a host city or attending UK CoC events.
- Increased cultural participation, particularly by neighbourhoods and communities that are more deprived: 83% of residents living in the most deprived parts of Derry/Londonderry attended a UK CoC 2013 event.

³ [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67fce7e5694d57c6b1cf8cb4/Paper_1 - Evidence Review UK Cities of Culture Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67fce7e5694d57c6b1cf8cb4/Paper_1_-_Evidence_Review_UK_Cities_of_Culture_Final.pdf)

⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e3e2cb7fd10a62fac3ea7f/ACCESSIBLE_Copy_for_publication_Dr._Garcia-UKCC-Interviews-FINAL.pdf

Increase of 14% in regular cultural participation in Coventry between 2018 and 2022; in key neighbourhoods the increase was 36%.

- Notable uplifts in wellbeing scores for participants engaging with the UK CoC (these increases are not mirrored at overall population level). In Coventry, beneficiaries of the Caring City programme saw scores (using the ONS 4 Subjective Wellbeing measures) for life satisfaction increase from an average of 6.71 to 7.56, for feelings of life being worthwhile increased from 7.08 to 7.77, feelings of happiness increased from 7.00 to 7.54, and levels of anxiety dropped from 4.42 to 4.11.

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PLYMOUTH 2029

UK CITY OF CULTURE

Scrutiny Committee 4th Feb 2026



Introductions



Process Update



Local response



Case Studies



Plymouth Proposition & Alignment



Expression of Interest (EOI) Stage

Submission required 8th February 2026

The following places have declared an intention to bid:

- **Wrexham**
- **Portsmouth**
- **Ipswich**
- **Bristol**



Engagement Update

Sector briefings

3 sessions held reaching over 290 creatives from across Plymouth and surrounding areas

Useful feedback reflecting the need for the bid to reference:

- Young people – opportunities and challenges of engagement
- Schools and cultural education/ creative careers
- Inclusion and accessibility
- The significance of our location – moors and sea
- Spaces for culture – existing and needed
- Social enterprise, impact and engagement and how all are strong in Plymouth
- Community voice and citizen-led decision making
- Excellence in the cultural offer but also the links to research, innovation and international reach
- The importance of freelancers



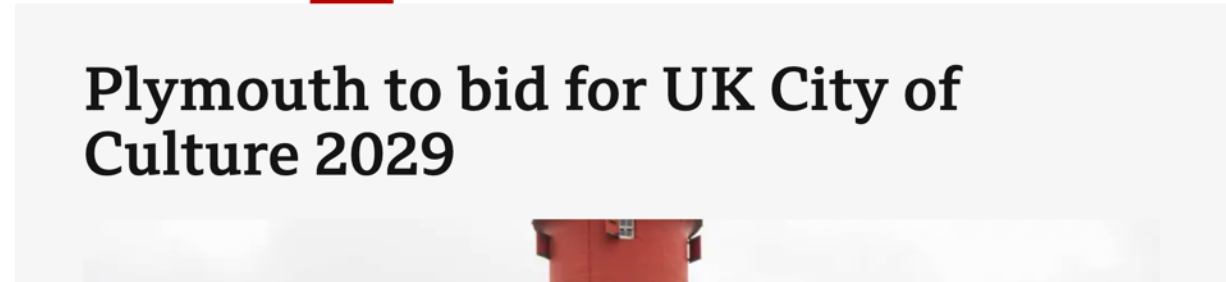
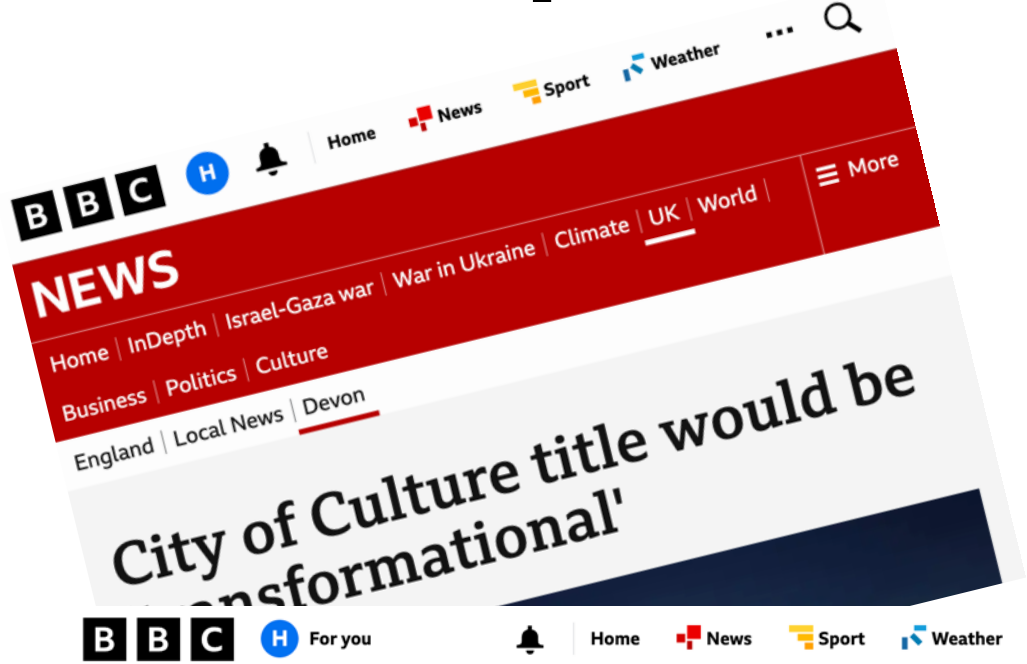
Engagement Update

Community drop-in sessions

Three community drop-in sessions held across the city - Saltram, Drake Circus and The Beacon North Prospect.

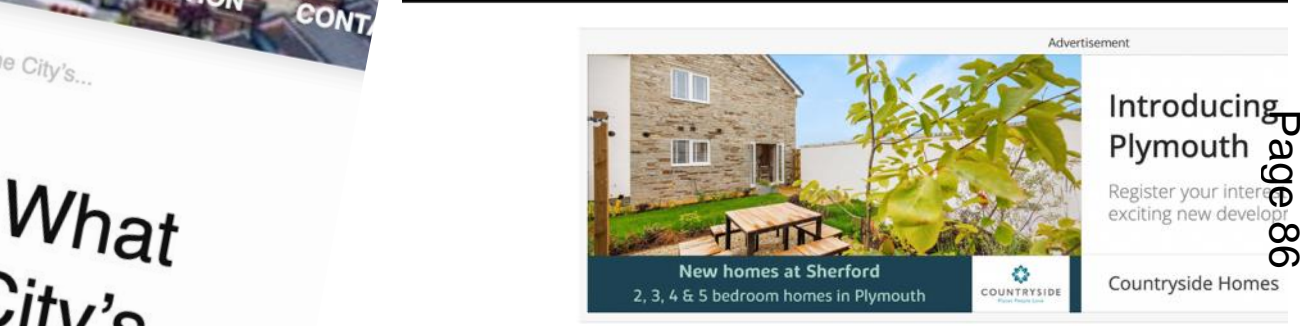
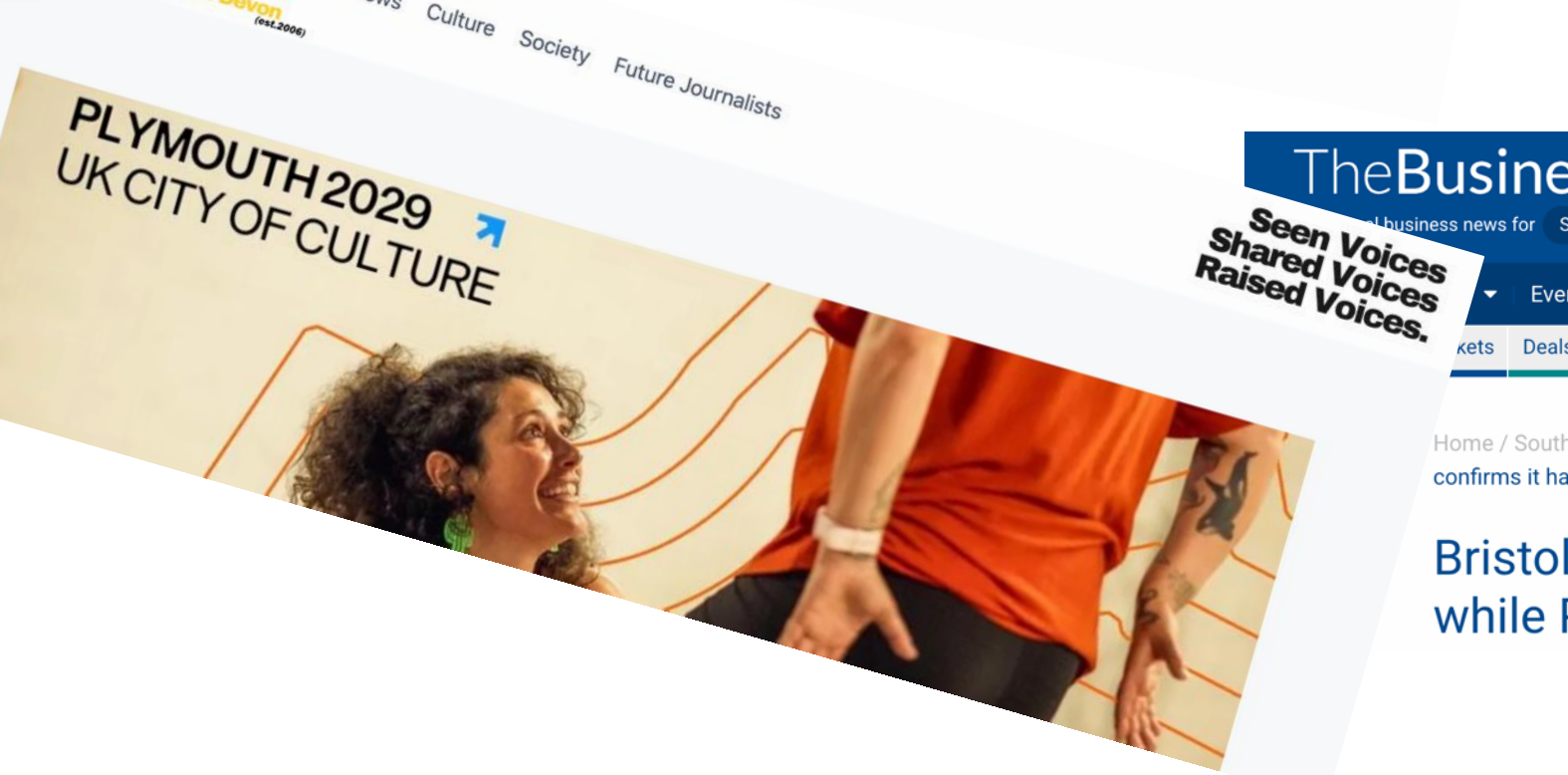
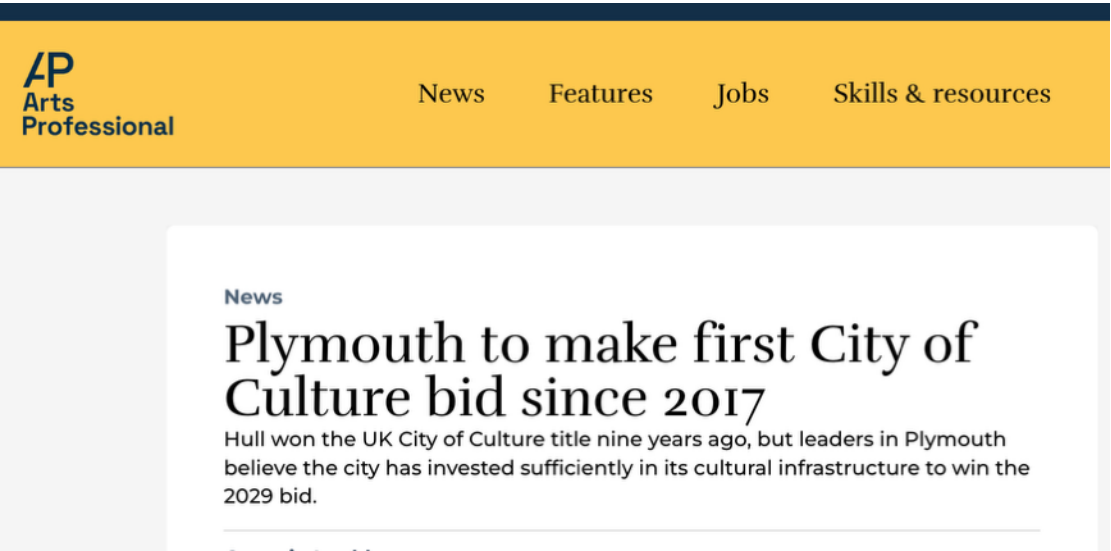
Partner organisations have also hosted discussions with community groups including - Real Ideas, FotoNow, Scrapstore, Barbican Theatre, Waterfront Partnership, Destination Plymouth, University of Plymouth, Arts University Plymouth, PCC Public Health teams

Local response



Plymouth to bid to become City of Culture 2029

News Home More from Local News



Bristol mulls UK City of Culture 2029 bid while Plymouth confirms it has entered race





City of Culture Case Studies

Overall Impact



Stimulated investment of £1b across the cities (excluding Bradford)



70% of all attendees reported a greater sense of pride in place



Bradford - attracted audiences of 1 million, reached 11k pupils and engaged 2k volunteers in the first 6 months



City of Culture Case Studies

Lessons Learnt



The schools programme in Derry did not achieve the key stage 2 attainment targets because it didn't align with additional programme support



Audiences aged 16-34 were under represented in Hull



Timing coincided with the pandemic - there were communication issues across the partnership and the newly formed Trust could not embed to gain trust and goodwill



The proposition



Cultural ambition - this is a growth proposition



The story of Plymouth is the story of the nation



We offer a blueprint for culture led regeneration in coastal towns & cities



We are showcasing and celebrating all that makes Plymouth unique and reclaiming our position as a global engine for change



Plymouth Alignment

- ➔ The cultural ambition shown through bidding for UK City of Culture will help to amplify other work across the city
- ➔ It will support community engagement and cohesion leading to civic pride
- ➔ It will complement the new towns and city centre developments through cultural placemaking
- ➔ It will be a mechanism to achieve inclusive growth ambitions set out by Team Plymouth



Thank you

Stay connected, back the
bid, get involved

<https://www.plymouthculture.co.uk/city-of-culture>

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Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel

Work Programme 2025/26



Please note that the work programme is a ‘live’ document and subject to change at short notice. The information in this work programme is intended to be of strategic relevance.

For general enquiries relating to the Council’s Scrutiny function, including this Committee’s work programme, please contact Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor) on 01752 305155.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member/Lead Officer
09 July 2025	Plan for Homes 4: Year 1 Progress Report	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Penberthy/Matt Garrett/Nick Carter/Neil Mawson
	Economic Intelligence and Insight	Standing Item	Standing Item	David Draffan/Amanda Ratsey/Lauren Paton
	Productive Growth and High Value Jobs (Economic Strategy Pillar 1)	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Evans OBE/David Draffan/Amanda Ratsey/Richard Davies
	Freeport Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Evans OBE/Richard May/Ian Cooper
Site Visit 15 August 2025	Naval Base Tour			
10 September 2025	Skills (Economic Strategy Pillar 5)	4	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Cresswell/David Draffan/Tina Brinkworth/Amanda Davis
Site Visit 07 October 2025	Tinside Tour			

15 October 2025	Inclusive Growth (Economic Strategy Pillar 2)	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Penberthy/Anna Peachey/Amanda Ratsey/Lindsey Hall
	Plan for Nature and People	4	Added at agenda set 10 Sept 2025	Cllr Briars-Delve/Kat Deeney
	Brand Strategy	3	Added by Chair 18 Sept 2025	Cllr Evans OBE/Amanda Lumley
	The Box Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Laing/Victoria Pomery/Rebecca Bridgman
03 December 2025	Sustainable Growth (Economic Strategy Pillar 3) (To include Economic Intelligence and Insight)	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Briars-Delve/Amanda Ratsey/Richard Stevens
	Plymouth Plan Update and Review	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Stephens/Paul Barnard/Jonathan Bell/Rebecca Miller/Sarah Gooding
	Plymouth Local Plan: Next Steps and Timetable	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Stephens/Paul Barnard/Jonathan Bell/Rebecca Miller
	Tree Management Principles Document	5	As part of a Council Motion/pre-decision scrutiny	Cllr Briars-Delve/Kat Deeney
29 January 2026	Waterfront Business Improvement District (BID) Renewal	4	Suggestion by officers November 2025	Cllr Evans/David Draffan/Patrick Knight

	Plymouth Ports Strategy Update	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Evans/Amanda Ratsey
04 February 2026	Civic Pride and Regeneration (Economic Strategy Pillar 4)	4	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Laing/David Draffan/Emma Wilson/Victoria Pomery/Mike Page/James McKenzie Blackman
	Visitor Plan/Culture Plan Annual update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Laing/Hannah Harris/Amanda Lumley/James McKenzie Blackman/Paul Fieldsend-Danks
	National Marine Park Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Evans/Cllr Briars-Delve/Elaine Hayes/Kat Deeney
Items to be scheduled for 2025/26				
2025/26				
Items to be scheduled for 2026/27				
July 2026	Draft Net Zero Action Plan 2026-29 & Draft Net Zero Route Map	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Briars-Delve/Paul Barnard/Jonathan Bell
2026/27	Freeport Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Evans OBE/David Draffan/Ian Cooper
2026/27	Update on Plan for Homes inc modelling on long term impact new homes/jobs impact will have on rent	4	Action from 09 July 2025 Panel meeting. To include Min 4ll	Cllr Penberthy/Paul Barnard/Nick Carter
2026/27	Strategic Heat Network Procurement	5	Identified for consideration at the October 2024 meeting.	Cllr Briars-Delve/John Green/Jonathan Selman
2026/27	The Box Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Laing/Victoria Pomery

2026/27	Plymouth Plan for Nature and People Action Plan Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Briars-Delve/Chris Avent/Kat Deeney
2026/27	Co-op Strategy	4	Added prior to pre meet on 10 June 2024.	Cllr Penberthy/Anna Peachey/Amanda Ratsey
TBC	Chelson Meadow Solar Farm	5	Agreed via recommendation at the March 2023 meeting.	Cllr Briars-Delve/Kat Deeney
Items Identified for Select Committee Reviews				
2026/27	Water/Flooding		Identified for consideration at the 15 October 2025 meeting	

Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool

		Yes (=1)	Evidence
P ublic Interest	Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community?		
A bility	Could Scrutiny have an influence?		
P erformance	Is this an area of underperformance?		
E xtent	Does the topic affect people living, working, or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth?		
R eplication	Will this be the only opportunity for public scrutiny?		
	Is the topic due planned to be the subject of an Executive Decision?		
Total:			High/Medium/Low

Priority	Score
High	5-6
Medium	3-4
Low	1-2

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Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

Key:	
	Complete
	In Progress
	Not Started
	On Hold

Minute No.	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
Minute 90 Tracking Decisions 1 March 2023	Request for regular updates on the Habitat Banking Vehicle.	Date Due: Ongoing Officer: Chris Avent Progress: Agreement to provide updates to Committee Members via Democratic Support at suitable milestones for the project. Latest update shared with members February 2025. Asked for update 13 August 2025.
Minute 34 Draft NZAP 2025-2028 12 February 2025	The Panel recommended developing a Climate Communications Plan to include making information more accessible via the Plymouth City Council Website.	Date Due: March 2026 Responsible Officer: Christopher Parsons Progress: This recommendation is currently under active consideration by the Net Zero Delivery Team and the Corporate Communications Team. Update August 2025: Teams from Net Zero and Corporate Communication continue to work together closely on planning and executing communications around a number of important NZAP actions. Conversations on producing not just a plan, but also an overarching strategic narrative to determine how we talk about, include and engage our residents on net zero have been fruitful and the drafting is ongoing. Alongside this, and to ensure we get this right, we are engaging partners to ensure that any potential messaging

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

		resonates and can be effectively rolled out. Meanwhile, Climate Connections continues to be a busy online hub for Plymouth's climate endeavours and has been prolific in terms of raising awareness of and promoting pro-climate messaging from the Council and its partners.
Minute 34 Draft NZAP 2025-2028 12 February 2025	The Panel recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change seek to secure ratchet funding in future years and to ask Finance to review any future caps to ensure the money was set aside and could be added to.	Date Due: March 2026 Responsible Officer: Paul Barnard/Emmanuelle Marshall Progress: This recommendation is currently under active consideration by the Net Zero Delivery Team and the Finance Department. Following the consideration of options, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and Cabinet Member for Finance will review the position ahead of the 2026/2027 budget setting process.
Minute 13p Skills (Economic Strategy Pillar 5) 10 September 2025	More information would be provided with regards to data on the specific job roles that would make up the 25,000 additional workers needed in Plymouth within the next 10 years.	Date Due: 28 February 2026 Responsible Officer: Toby Hall Progress: Data won't be ready for some months. Catch-up with officers scheduled for February 2026.
Minute 13ccc Skills (Economic Strategy Pillar 5) 10 September 2025	Data would be provided on how many Councils had chosen to deliver the [Connect to Work] programme in-house and how many had commissioned, but most had chosen to take a blended approach.	Date Due: February 2026 Responsible Officer: David Wales Progress: Data won't be ready for some months. Catch-up with officers scheduled for February 2026.
Minute 28ff Sustainable Growth (Economic Strategy Pillar 3)	Officers would share an updated project list and findings following initial monitoring.	Date Due: March 2026 Responsible Officer: Mike Page Progress: Holding response shared 10 December 2025.

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

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