

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 11 December 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Darcy, in the Chair.
Councillor Holloway, Vice Chair.
Councillors Allen, Bannerman, McCarty, McLay, Moore, Raynsford, Ricketts, M.Smith and Sproston.

Also in attendance: Councillors Briars-Delve, Evans OBE and Laing, Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor), Kat Deeny (Head of Environmental Planning), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Elaine Hayes (National Marine Park CEO), Karime Hassan (Interim Director for Growth), Robert McGuffie (Development Manager), Anna Peachey (Manager for Economy, Partnerships and Regeneration), Victoria Pomery (CEO, The Box), Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economy & Investment), James Whitelock (Head of Oceansgate Infrastructure) and Ian Cooper (Operations Director, Plymouth Freeport) and Hannah Harris (CEO, Plymouth Culture).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.55 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

20. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

21. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

22. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

23. **Economic Insight and Intelligence**

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) Insight and intelligence was used to ensure Plymouth was lobbying for the right resources to help address inequalities, and where to spend funding to make a difference to the people in the city;

- b) This report focused on inclusive growth, including the importance of not just creating jobs, but ensuring that local people could access those jobs and understanding what the barriers were to people getting those jobs;
- c) It was important to understand how opportunities and wealth generation could positively impact everyone;
- d) Wealth was intrinsically linked to health and the report showed the links between deprivation and factors such as caring responsibilities and health.

Anna Peachey (Economy/Partnerships/Regeneration Manager) added:

- e) There were three distinct groups that the inclusive growth pillar of the economic strategy was focused on and Plymouth had a particularly high number of people that fell into these categories and were facing challenges:
 - i. Deprived Communities;
 - ii. Caring responsibilities;
 - iii. Health challenges;
- f) It was important to understand the further complexities people could experience if they also had a protected characteristic;
- g) Plymouth had 28 lower super output areas, which were sub-neighbourhoods that were in the lowest 10% in England and the reasons were the following (of which the first three were a focus for the team):
 - i. Income;
 - ii. Employment;
 - iii. Skills;
 - iv. Health;
 - v. Crime;
 - vi. Barriers to housing, services;
 - vii. Living Environment;
- h) The Economic Development Team worked with other teams across the Council who worked more closely in relation to some of these factors;
- i) The number of people in Plymouth who were not working because they were long-term sick had increased in recent years as well as people who had care responsibilities;

- j) Women with care responsibilities had a lower average wage than men with care responsibilities;
- k) The number of women with caring responsibilities who were being paid below the national living wage was higher in Plymouth than in the South West or in Great Britain;
- l) The number of people in Plymouth with work limiting health conditions was far higher than the national average.

In response to questions it was reported:

- m) The SHE project, which Iridescent CIC were part of, supported women starting their own businesses;
- n) The Council was committed to funding support for social enterprises;
- o) The Council worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide employability support through local organisations, often charities and social enterprises, such as RIO (Real Ideas Organisation);
- p) There had been a shift into acknowledging that the caring responsibilities of a child were not that just of a mother, but also a father and whilst primary caring responsibilities were undertaken 90% by women, the team were keen for it to become more gender neutral;
 - i. Although men would likely face some of the similar challenges that women face with low-pay part time roles, to fit around those responsibilities;
- q) The Plymouth Charter had around 380 signatories of businesses in Plymouth who committed to a fairer and greener future for the city;
- r) The four biggest employers in the city (Plymouth City Council, Babcock, University of Plymouth, and Derriford Hospital) were having monthly meetings to discuss issues like gender equality in primary carer responsibilities;
- s) The biggest change the team had seen in this area had been changing the conversation and ensuring that 'inclusive growth' was one of the four main pillars within the Council's economic strategy;
- t) There had been a significant increase of businesses joining the Disabled Employer Network, changing the way they recruit;
- u) There had been a focus in the city on preventing violence against women and girls and the team had been involved in relevant conversations and explain the economics for women in the city;
- v) Plymouth had recovered post-COVID19 in good growth;

- w) 7,000 full time jobs had been created, and whilst the city still wanted growth, it was important to be able to fill those jobs;
- x) New educational opportunities were needed;
- y) Barriers to work needed to be addressed;
- z) It was important to reduce the percentage of people in Plymouth's labour market who were economically inactive;
- aa) Partner organisations were working with people of all ages to improve their digital skills, and the skills team ensured that digital skills were supported in schools;
- bb) A Digital Champion would be announced shortly and could work closely with Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) to improve digital skills taught in schools and higher education;
- cc) There was a scheme which allowed employers to support immigration by filling roles, something the NHS has been excellent at;
- dd) It was important to make immigrant families feel welcome and encourage them into increasing their economic activity;
 - i. There was a scheme which allowed employers to support immigration by filling roles, something the NHS has been excellent at;
 - ii. Illegal immigrants and Asylum Seekers wouldn't have work visas until they had the right to remain;
 - iii. The Panel would be provided with a further breakdown of the percentage of people in Plymouth who were economically inactive, including the number of those who were immigrants;
- ee) Learnings from the successes of reducing youth unemployment could be applied to other areas such as reducing long-term sickness and increasing the average wage of women;
- ff) A personalised approach was very effective in encouraging people into employment, because everyone's personal situation was unique to them;
- gg) The Employment Rights Bill would influence relevant policy to create change;
- hh) Work was ongoing to support Care Leavers into employment;
- ii) Generally, if people had good employment, and could afford a good home, their life would be of good quality and would impact on other factors such as good health.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

24. **Freeport Annual Update**

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) Plymouth and South Devon Freeport (PASDF) was committed to delivering to the existing strategy for the city through supporting the defence and marine sectors;
- b) £25 million in capital funding had been secured and PASDF were the first to spend this funding;
- c) PASDF had enabled Associated British Ports (ABP) to complete £23 million worth of port improvements, driving net zero and increasing exports;
- d) PASDF has supported Cattewater Harbour Commissioners with their channel-widening project that would enable larger, greener vessels to come in and out of the port;
- e) Princess Yachts had been supported to enable production of a new line of yachts;
- f) £7 million had been secured for the Oceansgate Innovation Barns that would create 50 new jobs before the end of 2025;
- g) £8 million direct development into Langage South had started;
- h) 70 Jackal vehicles had been ordered by the British Army from Babcock and work was underway, with the creation of 90 new jobs;
- i) The possibility of FLOW (Floating Offshore Wind) was still being explored and going well;
- j) A £7 million innovation fund had been secured for the maritime launch pad;
- k) PASDF had held 20 major business events at various locations across the Freeport area, involving other local authorities;
- l) PASDF was part of the growth alliance to support and maximise the opportunities in Devonport worth £4.5 billion in investment.

Ian Cooper (Operations Director, Plymouth Freeport), supported by James Whitelock (Head of Oceansgate Infrastructure) and Robert McGuffie (Development Manager) reported the following:

- m) MHCLG were “pleased to see the maturity of the organisation and governance processes”;

- n) Taxi site benefits had been extended to 2031;
- o) Autumn 2024 budget had confirmed continued funding for the UK Freeport's programme and the new Labour Government intended to align the UK Freeport programme with its emerging 10 year industrial strategy;
- p) Greener ships might benefit in the future from the Langage Green Hydrogen Hub where Carlton Power had secured funding from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero for 10 megawatts of 100% green hydrogen fuel;
- q) The sites at Langage and Sherford had been identified as employment land in the Joint Local Plan (JLP);
- r) Seed and match funding was being used to install a pedestrian/cycle bridge to create an active travel connection between the Langage and Sherford sites;
- s) Oceansgate would deliver a place for marine businesses to innovate and collaborate;
 - i. It comprised of two buildings providing over 1,700m² of high-quality workspace built to the latest low carbon specifications;
 - ii. Work would be completed by the end of 2025, subject to planning approval;
 - iii. It was being constructed through £3.556m seed funding and £3.344m match funding;
 - iv. The units would be 70% lower in embodied carbon than traditional steel frame units, and would have timber frames and wood cladding;
 - v. There was interest from a client who wanted to use three of the eight total units;
- t) Langage South was a direct development from Plymouth City Council, following other similar projects;
 - i. Langage South would provide sustainable, high quality employment accommodation for around 138 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) jobs;
 - ii. It was funded by £4 million seed funding and £4 million match funding;
 - iii. Building was underway for completion in Autumn 2025;
 - iv. Units were being targeted to the key sectors as set out by the Freeport: Advanced Manufacturing, Defence and Marine, amongst others;

- v. Sustainability and net zero had been a key focus in the design;
- vi. Expressions of interest had been made into the scheme for units;
- u) The business growth team had instigated a range of initiatives in collaboration with local authority trade and investment teams and colleagues in national Government;
- v) Continued collaboration with Plymouth City Council, Ministry of Defence (MOD), University of Plymouth (UoP) and other key stakeholders to develop the city's Defence and Floating Offshore Wind propositions, particularly in relation to innovation;
- w) Construction and completion of key transport infrastructure investments to unlock areas of the Freeport's Tax Sites at Langage and Sherford, including DCC's Spine Road 1a and Ped/Cycle Bridge projects, plus the Sherford Consortium's road and core infrastructure scheme.

Supported by Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economy & Investment) and Karime Hassan (Interim Director for Growth), in response to questions it was reported:

- x) The gateway policy of sectors was created recognising the strengths of the city and region in marine and defence and this was now broadening to include advanced manufacturing, engineering and net-zero;
- y) The aim of the units was to create space that responded to business requirements;
- z) Businesses would have access to funding support and skills and be part of an ecosystem of ongoing support;
- aa) PASDF was a partnership between three local authorities, which was a unique model;
- bb) The Freeport lead on innovation, skills and stimulation of demand;
- cc) The work Plymouth City Council carried out on inclusive growth was exceptional in a regional context;
- dd) Plymouth had a rare opportunity to build an economy around a transformational growth opportunity and make a change to a higher paying, higher wage economy;
- ee) The same message was being promoted through the growth alliance in multiple spaces and to Government;
- ff) It was important that the Government understood its role in making sure the economy of Plymouth was not harmed and that the investment in Devonport was a "take-off" point for Plymouth economically and would influence many

sectors including housing, transport and culture;

- gg) The main political lobby needed was to align what Plymouth needed and what it could have.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

25. **National Marine Park Update**

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) Towards the end of 2023, Plymouth City Council (PCC) had secured £11.6 million of National Lottery Heritage funding that was going to enable delivery of a £22 million horizons project to bring life to the UK's first National Marine Park;
- b) In the programmes first year:
 - i. 1500 people had been able to get in, on, under or next to the National Marine Park (NMP), supported by the NMP gateways at Mountbatten, Tinside and Mount Edgcumbe;
 - ii. The gateways were working hard to help people to enjoy the NMP in new ways from learning to swim, to archaeology camps;
- c) Over 6000 people engaged with the “Meet the Marine Park” programme;
- d) The Ocean Conservation Trust, who ran the National Marine Aquarium, had been going out across the city to engage people with the NMP;
- e) 970 school children had begun their National Marine Park Journey, as part of the schools programme;
- f) 663 volunteers had been working alongside PCC teams to enhance the NMP through over 7160 hours;
- g) PCC and NMP had kickstarted a significant £10 million programme of waterfront regeneration, including Tinside, one of Plymouth's most iconic buildings and significant progress had already been made;
- h) There would be a more accessible pontoon at Mount Batten;
- i) The Norman Tower at Mount Batten would be made into a feature itself and made more accessible;
- j) The Mount Batten Centre would be renamed and refurbished to make more of the opportunities available;

- k) The Garden Battery at Mount Edgcumbe would be made accessible to the public and work would start in Summer 2025, once the bats had left;
- l) A new partnership between NMP and Plymouth Culture would help to deliver the digital engagement programme with funding from the Arts Council;
- m) Expressed his thanks to the PCC team, the partners, contractors, volunteers and community membered who had supported the project in its first year.

Councillor Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) added the following:

- n) Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) had been working closely with the team on the development of the schools programme;
 - i. By the end of the programme, all schools in Plymouth would have been invited to participate;
 - ii. Engagement would include visits to the National Marine Aquarium, inspirational speakers visiting schools, and digital engagement;
- o) Volunteer work had included beach cleans as well as prepping Tinside for the Summer season;
- p) The Ranger programme had been successful and many of them would be seen out and about across the NMP;
- q) The team were reaching out to communities across the city, reaching those who are further away from the coast;
- r) Every aspect was being evaluated to ensure that the delivery and impact could be improved each year;
- s) The 'Little Rays of Hope' programme with the Marine Biological Association (MBA) hatched and raised young rays for release into the NMP;
 - i. A competition was being run on Facebook to name the rays with lots of engagement and names such as Raymond, Dave, Raylor Swift and Lana Del Ray suggested;
- t) PCC's Environmental Planning team had been working with the NMP on development of green and blue finance opportunities;
- u) Ideas like seagrass tokens and viability of habitat restoration was being investigated.

Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) further explained:

- v) The team were very interested in working with people who had never had the opportunity to engage with the water and to engage them with it in the ways that they wanted;
- w) NMP worked with PWP and attended SeaFest in 2024;
- x) It was important to make people proud of where they lived and to connect them to the heritage of the city;
- y) Work on Tinside would make it more accessible and more welcoming, but assets were being created within to create an income to support the legacy of the project;
 - i. Some feedback had been that people wanted to enjoy the view but not get wet, so viewing spaces were being incorporated;
- z) Assets to support the legacy would also be in place at the Mount Batten Centre;
- aa) Investment in nature-based solutions was important;
- bb) The inspire programme would work on introducing 16-24 year olds to career pathways relating to the NMP.

Supported by David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) and Hannah Harris (CEO, Plymouth Culture) in response to questions it was reported:

- cc) The team had developed their schools programme with learnings from The Box on a similar project;
- dd) Transport costs to engagement opportunities for schools were covered;
- ee) An event for teachers was run to help develop the programme and whilst this was happening, all their children were taken around the aquarium, to help make it happen;
- ff) Between the seven rangers, they had 25 degrees as well as marine management and conservation experience;
- gg) It was important to understand how people engaged with marketing to ensure that it could adapt to be most effective;
- hh) Digital engagement had to opportunity to engage people more directly with the sea;
- ii) The team would consider being more clear on the National Marine Park, rather than referring to it as the park, because 'The Park' was actually the name of the cities crematorium;

- jj) A prioritisation process for engagement with schools had been adopted;
- kk) Every report that went to the NMP Board had environmental mitigation included;
- ll) Although the focus was always on minimising carbon, seagrass and blue carbon were being considered for offsetting in the future;
- mm) There had been some challenges in the redevelopment of Tinside but the contractors were working hard to keep to schedule and provide solutions;
- nn) A site visit could be offered to the Panel when Tinside was ready;
- oo) More community access points would be added before the end of the project.

The Panel agreed to:

- I. Note the PSNMP update and support the ongoing delivery.

(Councillor Holloway left the meeting during this item)

26. **Culture Plan Annual Update**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) The culture plan was ambitious, forward looking, and had people and place at its core;
- b) The plan had been developed with best practice from across the city;
- c) There was a need to ensure that culture was embedded into all areas of life for residents;
- d) The economic benefits of the creative and cultural sector were well understood, but the social impact was of equal, if not greater, significance;
- e) A strong and authentic cultural offer made a place more attractive to students, graduates and the wider workforce;
- f) Access to a culture offer could support improvement of mental and physical health outcomes for individuals and supports community cohesion and educational attainment;
- g) Plymouth needed to continue to value culture and better articulate its significance and unique contribution to economic and social outcomes;

- h) Most local authorities in England did not prioritise culture in the way that Plymouth continued to;
- i) The role of culture and creative industry was clearly valued within the Labour Government's missions and industrial strategy, giving Plymouth an opportunity to align local ambition and policy with national conversations;
- j) Further investment was needed in culture through a holistic approach.

Hannah Harris (CEO, Plymouth Culture) added:

- k) The three key drivers of the culture plan were:
 - i. Community;
 - ii. Environment;
 - iii. Inclusive Economy;
- l) The culture plan used these drivers to engage in the wider city agenda;
- m) The ambitions of the plan were:
 - i. "We will embrace our unique blue-grey-green landscapes, unlocking assets in our built and natural environments to create memorable experiences only imaginable in Plymouth";
 - ii. "We will make cultural encounters part of the everyday for everyone";
 - iii. "We will develop an exemplary model of co-creation where our audiences are active participants, making our cultural offer authentic and relevant";
 - iv. "We will be the UK's leading city for immersive cultural experiences, recognised for our ability to use digital technology to engage communities and build cross-sector connections";
 - v. "We will embed equality at every level of the sector to actively support diversity of voice and celebrate the creativity in everyone";
- n) The culture plan would focus on three strategic priorities which would shape decision making and resource allocation:
 - i. Place;
 - ii. Sector;
 - iii. People;

- o) 'Sea for Yourself' was a transformational cultural programme aligned to the newly established Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, to reconnect people with place, nature and cultural identity;
- p) The culture plan would create:
 - i. 259 opportunities for creative practitioners;
 - ii. Work with 71 freelancers;
 - iii. 1437 actively engaged participants;
 - iv. A digital audience reach of 430k;
- q) A lot of people in communities who were carrying out important work, did not see themselves as leaders which could result in missed opportunities of people who could be contributing to wider conversations;
 - i. A programme to help people self-identify as leaders was successful in giving people awareness of their own skills was successful;
 - ii. The team were looking at how this could be embedded as business as usual;
- r) Plymouth Art Weekender returned in 2024 for the first time since 2020 thanks to Visual Arts Plymouth who secured funds to make it happen;
 - i. Some spaces were outside, some inside, with different art forms represented;
 - ii. Artists were not paid and contributed for free;
- s) Spaces were being used in different ways to get different audiences in, such as silent discos at The Box.

Supported by David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) and Victoria Pomery (CEO, The Box), in response to questions it was reported:

- t) The Summer Sessions were a legacy of MTV Crashes, but there was now a commercial model with Live Nation to bring big artists to perform in the city at the event;
- u) Free tickets were provided to the Council for them to share, which in 2024 had gone to impacted residents, care leavers, foster carers and other community groups, through engagement with Councillors;
- v) A large event like Summer Sessions engaged a large audience but the benefits don't always reach the sector;

- w) There was a desire in the community that the Summer Sessions provided a platform for local musicians and was being negotiated with organisers;
- x) The team wanted to speak to locations that were happy to be part of events, such as the Plymouth Art Weekender, particularly in parts of the city that were not yet engaged, such as the north of Plymouth;
- y) There was a range of activity across the city;
- z) Most schools in Plymouth had visited The Box and the aim was all would have attended by 2026;
- aa) A lot of the arts and culture creativity in schools was down to individual schools and people, rather than embedded within the curriculum;
- bb) Youth service provision were using cultural and creative interventions to upskill;
- cc) The music action plan was based on the music diplomacy strategy used by local authorities across the world;
- dd) The way in which larger music events put money back into local economies and cultural sectors was an ongoing national debate;
- ee) There was a quarterly music forum that saw 30-40 people come together to talk about what was going on in the city and how they could support each other;
- ff) The focus of the music action plan was published online and a link would be shared with Panel members;
- gg) Plymouth Culture had hosted a funding event with the Arts Council's Grassroots Music Fund so more venues could apply;
- hh) Plymouth City Centre Company and Plymouth Waterfront Partnership were working with Plymouth Culture to increase music in spaces and at events;
- ii) It was important to raise awareness of opportunities available;
- jj) Teachers could take students on a self-guided tour around The Box, but they could also opt for days where they could engage more with staff;
- kk) The Homes England Board had been hosted in Plymouth, who were looking to make £100 million investment in Plymouth, and the role of culture in creating places that people want to live was important with these types of opportunities.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

27. **Work Programme**

Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor) explained:

- a) The work programme had been significantly updated since publication and the agenda for the meeting on 12 February 2025 was as follows:
 - i. Future Skills Strategy;
 - ii. Draft NZAP;
 - iii. Creative Industries Plan
- b) An update on Habitat Banking Vehicle, Chelson Meadow Solar Farm and Plymouth Plan would be sought before the next meeting and shared with Panel members via email if possible, as they had not been able to be scheduled for a meeting in the 2024/25 municipal year;
- c) South West Water would be confirmed for a meeting in April 2025;
- d) A number of items in the 'to be scheduled' section were on transport and so a meeting to look at all types of transport in the city would be pencilled in for early in 2025/26;
- e) A copy of the latest work programme would be circulated to Panel members following the meeting.

28. **Tracking Decisions**

The Panel noted its tracking decisions document.

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