

# Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel

**Wednesday 15 October 2025**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor Ricketts, in the Chair.

Councillor Holloway, Vice Chair.

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

Apologies for absence: Councillors Bannerman and Darcy.

Also in attendance: Also in attendance: Councillors Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change), Evans OBE (Leader of the Council), Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) and Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities). Rebecca Bridgeman (Head of Collections and Programme) Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth), Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Lindsay Hall (Real Ideas Organisation), Amanda Lumley (Chief Executive of Destination Plymouth), Anna Peachey (Manager for Economy, Regeneration and Partnerships), Victoria Pomery (CEO of The Box), Andy Sharp (Interim Service Director for Street Services) and Claire Taylor (Plymouth Marjon University).

The meeting started at 2.02 pm and finished at 5.07 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.*

## 16. **Declarations of Interest**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Minute Number</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Councillor Allen	19	Worked for a trade union.	Personal.

## 17. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 18. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

19. **Plymouth Economic Strategy Inclusive Growth Pillar Update (Economic Strategy Pillar 2)**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) The third pillar of the Economic Strategy focused on inclusive growth, aiming to ensure that economic development benefitted all residents focusing on systemic change and long-term commitment;
- b) 46.2% of women in Plymouth earned below the real living wage (£466 per week), and it needed to be tackled through inclusive growth;
- c) 13,600 people were economically inactive due to long-term sickness as of December 2024;
- d) 46,000 residents lived in areas ranked in the bottom 10% nationally for deprivation;
- e) The importance of tackling the barriers for people getting into work;
- f) The strategy set ambitious targets: lifting 3,000 people out of poverty and helping 5,000 economically inactive people into work;
- g) Four themes were identified: good business models, accessible local jobs, community sector empowerment, and employment pathways;
- h) The inclusion of Inclusive Growth within the Economic Strategy was unusual compared to other places across the country.

Lindsay Hall (Real Ideas Organisation) added:

- i) Emphasised the national significance of Plymouth's inclusive growth strategy;
- j) A new reporting system had been developed to measure the projects progress against the work of the five pillars of the economic strategy;
- k) The importance of social value procurement, and the appetite to do more in this area from different organisations in Plymouth such as Babcock through the Plymouth Charter;
- l) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was a choice for businesses and was different from legally mandated social value, but it was important to connect them.

Claire Taylor (Plymouth Marjon University) added:

- m) Social mobility was to enable those within Plymouth communities from lower socio-economic backgrounds to secure the net level of high-quality

education and employment opportunities relevant to them;

- n) The importance of removing barriers to engagement, particularly for those who identified with protected characteristics.

Councillor Penberthy added at this stage:

- o) A project called Building Bridges to Opportunity was a citywide system approach to tackle poverty in Plymouth and would link in with the work on this pillar.

Supported by Anna Peachey (Manager for Economy, Regeneration and Partnerships) and David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), in response to questions, the following was discussed:

- p) The idea of a four-day working week to support gender equality and mental health;
- q) Work with women to identify the barriers they face day-to-day;
- r) Engaging trade unions to tackle employment practices such as zero-hour contracts and fire-and-rehire policies and working with employers to promote better practices and how it can work better;
- s) Some impact was already tracked, but a dashboard and spreadsheet were being developed to track progress;
- t) Some change was long-term and would take time to show in metrics;
- u) It was important to understand the lived experiences of women in the city and reflect this in the work of this pillar of the economic strategy;
- v) Local data was being used to avoid assumptions based on national trends;
- w) More data in the future was needed at both meetings, and in communications, to ensure the work was evidence based, but also to show marked improvements;
- x) Pathways to employment and the government's new target for Level 4 qualifications;
- y) The importance of variety of progression pathways and removing barriers to engagement;
- z) What made this strategy different from previous was strategic, systemic buy-in and the opportunity to leverage social value;
- aa) Statistics showed persistent inequality rather than worsening conditions;

- bb) The importance of holding partners accountable for inclusive growth outcomes.

The Panel agreed to note the report and the continued focus on inclusive growth as a key element of the Plymouth Economic Strategy.

20. **Brand Strategy**

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

- a) Plymouth's need to better market itself nationally and internationally;
- b) £4.4 billion investment and 25,000 new jobs over the next decade required a strong brand to attract talent;
- c) The need to brand Plymouth as a great place to live, work, visit and invest in;
- d) Research by Bloom consulting showed that perception affected 86% of willingness to live, work, visit or invest in a place, but that if a city improved perception by just one decimal point, it would equal a 15% increase in tourism, 21% increase in talent attraction and 17.5% increase in foreign direct investment;
- e) The extensive engagement process, including 2,000 hours of meetings with local communities, partners and organisations, 250 public responses, 100 UK-wide surveys, and 100 street conversations and workshops, resulting in overwhelmingly positive feedback;
- f) Research by PRD, commissioned by Destination Plymouth, found that the city had improved over the past 20 years, but perception lagged, and suggested ways in which the city could improve its perception, which would be taken forward in the branding work;
- g) The new strapline was "Make Life an Adventure," supported by six key narratives;
- h) The launch of the promotional film, which received over 119,000 Facebook views and 3,200 LinkedIn views in its first week.

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

- i) Outlined the engagement process and listed key partners involved including: Princess Yachts, Babcock, The University of Plymouth, Arts University Plymouth, Marjon University, Plymouth City College, DBI, Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, Real Ideas Organisation, Plymouth Growth Board, Plymouth Manufacturing Group, Plymouth Culture, Plymouth Community Homes, Ocean Conservation Trust, Theatre Royal Plymouth, The Box, University Hospitals Plymouth, Plymouth Active and Plymouth

Sound National Marine Park;

- j) The brand reflected Plymouth's personality: bold, collaborative, and ambitious;
- k) The brand had received a positive response locally, nationally and internationally;
- l) The brand used a new visual approach, shaped by Plymouth's place, between two national parks alongside a vivid colour palette to contrast against the natural tones of the city's landscape, mirroring the city's energy, whilst rooting it in the physical environment;
- m) A brand toolkit was available online for all to use;
- n) Funding had been provided through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as well as business partners from across the city.

Amanda Lumley (Chief Executive of Destination Plymouth) added:

- o) It was important through research to understand why people choose to live and move to the city, to help inform the branding;
- p) Princess Yachts and Plymouth City Bus were already using the branding to support their work.

Supported by David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), in response to questions, the following was discussed:

- q) A webinar and outreach were planned to reach smaller businesses within the city;
- r) Concerns were raised about the logo design and public perception;
- s) DNCO, a global branding firm, led the design;
- t) The logo was one part of the brand;
- u) Praised the strapline but suggested future videos include local accents;
- v) Targeted campaigns were planned to reach individuals and businesses that were outside of engaged networks;
- w) Value for money in the branding process;
- x) The brand development group were involved in the procurement process to decide which company to work with on the branding;
- y) The artwork, sound and visuals had all been produced with companies from the South West;

- z) Disappointment that a Plymothian voice had not been used to narrate the video;
- aa) The next phase for Destination Plymouth was how to use and promote the brand;
- bb) A negative post about the brand had received significantly less engagement than a positive one from the same news outlet;
- cc) 25,000 jobs would be created in Plymouth from 2025-2035;
- dd) Possibilities for future funding of the future work of Destination Plymouth;
- ee) The toolkit link would be sent to Councillors **ACTION**;
- ff) The branding had been developed with partners, not just by the Council.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

## 21. **Update: The Box and its performance**

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

- a) The Box had celebrated its fifth anniversary with over 1.1 million visits to date;
- b) A social and economic impact report had been commissioned from Counterculture which The Box had engaged 89% of Plymouth schools and generated £100 million in health and wellbeing value;
- c) 13% of visitors to The Box were new to museums and galleries;
- d) A new season of exhibitions was upcoming including an exhibition looking at the connections between Plymouth and Poland;
- e) A Beryl Cook exhibition would be coming in 2026.

In response to questions, supported by Victoria Pomery (CEO of The Box), Rebecca Bridgeman (Head of Collections and Programme) and David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), the following was discussed:

- f) Pop-up shop partnership with Bookbag and that future commercial partnerships were planned with those whose values aligned with The Box;
- g) Staff were engaging communities and planning more pop-ups and engagement outside of The Box in other venues such as Market Hall through archives, loaning of items, as well as utilising a digital offer;

- h) The Box compared favourably with national institutions in terms of visitor demographics;
- i) The Box was aligned with the city branding;
- j) Enquired how many visitors to Plymouth had visited The Box which the team explained they did not have to hand but could provide through Destination Plymouth **ACTION**;
- k) Information on whether local visitor travel area was beyond the boundary of the travel to work area for Plymouth **ACTION**;
- l) There had been a shift in cruise ship visitors and trips to keep more within Plymouth, and The Box was getting more visits from cruise ship visitors;
- m) New ideas had to be thought of all the time, for example The Box was one of the first venues to do silent discos, but several different venues across the city were doing them, so the commercial strategy had to adapt;
- n) The scale of the collection (over 2 million items) and future programming, including digital innovation.

The Panel agreed to note the update.

## 22. **Plan for Nature and People**

Councillor Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) There had been a 19% decline in species abundance in the UK since 1970 and 16% of British species were at risk of extinction;
- b) There was a need to address the disconnect in the city between how the Council's work in this area was perceived, compared to what was being achieved;
- c) The Plan for Nature was co-created with hundreds of residents and stakeholders;
- d) It aimed to address biodiversity loss, climate resilience, and community engagement;
- e) Some examples of the planned actions included: planting 1000 street trees by 2023, working with communities to develop neighbourhood level enhancement, achieving green flag status for 12 sites in the city by 2030, celebrating Plymouth's unique species expanding ecotherapy and social prescribing, creating Plymouth's first natural capital investment prospectus;

- f) Expressed thanks to all the residents, academics, environmental groups, Council officers, Councillors and other organisations who had helped shape this new document.

Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) added:

- g) The need to make Plymouth's natural assets work for the city;
- h) The importance of aligning work in this area to national environmental policies;
- i) Plymouth had the UK's first national marine park and the UK's first local authority owned habitat bank;
- j) The plan strategically aligned nature alongside growth;
- k) Five key objectives were identified, with a five-year action plan and monitoring framework;
- l) The need to rebuild trust with the community on the Council's work in this area;
- m) Over 1000 residents were engaged in conversations that fed into the creation of the plan.

Supported by Andy Sharp (Interim Service Director for Street Services), in response to questions, the following was discussed:

- n) There was a multi-agency plan for water in development;
- o) A select committee on flooding/water would be added to the work programme **ACTION**;
- p) Work was underway on a number of sites across the city that suffered with flooding to reduce flood risk;
- q) Work was underway on how allotments could be best utilised for communities e.g. half or shared plots;
- r) Financial restraints limited the ability to improve playparks;
- s) The steering group would include diverse community voices;
- t) Any executive decision on a capital project over £200,000 had to have a completed climate impact assessment which connected Council departments;
- u) Ecotherapy and social prescribing were being expanded;



- v) 89% of young people who took part in ecotherapy said their anxiety had improved as a result;
- w) Data-led bin collection and community engagement were planned to tackle littering;
- x) Park rangers reported incidents of street homelessness and signposted to support.

The Panel agreed to:

1. Endorse the proposed changes to the draft Plymouth Plan for Nature and People following public consultation, to act as a strategic delivery framework integrating nature and natural spaces into the city's growth;
2. Support the creation of a Year 1 Action Plan for delivery in 2026;
3. Request that this item return to the Panel for annual review of the action plan.

23. **Work Programme**

Councillor McLay asked that the following item be chased as it had been an action from Council:

- a) Plymouth Plan Full Council Motion (To ensure that play was embedded into the plan and that it set a framework for a play delivery plan with targeted interventions).

The Panel noted its work programme.

24. **Action Log**

The Panel noted its action log.

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