

**Devon Communities Together
COVID19 Community Local
Outbreak & Recovery Helpline**
Supporting Village Halls, Community
Buildings, Parish and Town Councils.

**End of Phase 5
Report**

June 2021



**Covid-19 Community Local
Outbreak & Recovery Helpline
From Devon Communities
Together**

Supporting Village Halls, Community
Buildings, Parish and Town Councils
into the recovery phase

Call 0808 1963390



**Helping Communities Help
Themselves for 60 Years**

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1.0 Phase 5 – Summary of COVID-19 activities April - July 2021

Phase 5 of the COVID-19 helpline project ran from May 2021, to 19th July 2021 at which point national COVID-19 restrictions were removed and the helpline subsequently closed. Throughout this period, our COVID-19 helpline saw a trend whereby queries related to opening up, rather than closing down, and how to do so in the safest possible way. There were a total of **176** enquiries on the COVID-19 helpline in this period; **52** in April, **51** in May, **62** in June, and **11** during the period 1st-19th July.

Requests for help with completing Restart Grant applications have continued through this period, as well as requests from community groups regarding applications to The National Lottery, Community Renewal Fund, and The Return to Play Fund. We have additionally continued to deal with many requests from specific support around types of event or community building use, and council and committee meetings. Finally, we began to see pre-emptive calls in late June and July asking advice on best practice once official restrictions end.

Our engagement with Devon’s strategic partnerships working to support the COVID-19 recovery process during this phase has included:

- Team Devon Recovery Co-ordination Group (DRCG)
- DRCG sub groups including VCSE Recovery (co-Chairing fortnightly meetings); Data and Impact Assessment; Employability, Skills and Business
- Meetings with ACRE & NHS Devon re Rural Health Inequalities
- Local Resilience Forum (Vaccination) Volunteer Cell meetings
- Devon Together Alliance meeting
- Community Renewal Fund Devon briefings
- Community Leaders online hackathon (NHS remote consultations)
- Devon Food Partnership VCSE representation & Food Insecurity Consultation
- Developing support for people who need to self- isolate planning meeting
- Devon Rural Housing Partnership Board meeting
- East Devon Mental Health Support meeting
- Joining the Devon Urban Renewal Working Group led by the Economy, Enterprise, and Skills Team at Devon County Council

Our Phase 5 research has focussed on two key elements; a volunteer legacy, and high street build back better, the volunteering legacy work included the delivery of **2 surveys**, one for volunteers and one for volunteer groups, with a combined total of **94 responses**. We then followed the surveys with **2 focus groups**. Our findings from the volunteers surveys and groups was largely covered in the May report, but will be summarised here in section 3.

Our work with town centres around post-COVID-19 recovery will be the subject of section 4. Here we **engaged with 4 Devon towns**; holding conversations with 2 towns to discuss support needs and initiatives, and then in depth workshops with 2 further towns.

2.0 Covid-19 Local Outbreak and Recovery Helpline Activities

2.1 Group Type

This phase continued to see the highest levels of demand from community buildings and local councils with 154 of the 176 enquiries coming from these groups. A further 10 enquiries came from other community groups which included groups that exist around an event such as a local fayre, or special interests such as dance, folk, or for over 60s. 3 came from private enterprise, all of which related to fitness. There were then 3 enquiries which came from Devon schools or pre-schools, 2 which came from individuals, and 1 came from a community network representative (Hallshare)

2.2 Key Issues Identified April, May, June, July to the 19th 2021

KEY ISSUES			
General Category	Total number	Specific Issues	Details and Support Provided
Financial advice, support, and management	31	Primarily related to accessing the restart grant	Grant application details, and criteria have been shared, including advising regarding specific community contexts.
Community building / activities - current	139	Holding meetings of parish councils or hall committees, a range of event / activity uses of community buildings	Many communities have sought support to apply regulations to their specific situation, along with ensuring they have correctly interpreted numbers permissible and social distancing arrangements
Community buildings / activities – looking ahead to post-regulations	6	Enquiries related to the extent to which restrictions on capacity and other COVID-19 measures can be disregarded from 19 th July	Enquirers under this category were advised that although technically legal limits are now removed, it is advisable to maintain a level of capacity and other measures with which your users will feel safe.

Table 1: Table showing and providing details on specific issues identified

3.0 The Legacy of COVID-19 Volunteering

The May report identified and summarised findings from four key activities; a survey for COVID-19 volunteer groups, and survey for COVID-19 volunteers, a focus group for COVID-19 volunteer groups and a focus group for COVID-19 volunteers. We additionally attended a meeting in June run by East Devon District Council to help understand the support needs for mutual aid groups at this time.

With 47 responses to both the COVID-19 volunteers' survey, and the survey for volunteer group organisers, along with follow up groups we are able to summarise the following key findings.

- Most, approximately two thirds of volunteer groups that supported communities through COVID-19, are still active in some form, and of the remaining third most are dormant with only two groups reporting that they had totally disbanded.
- Despite the rapid formation of many groups they generally felt they had good processes, although confidence in the training and induction of volunteers were low and in the focus group attendees felt they 'muddled through' with GDPR adherence.
- Many groups are now supporting the community more broadly with access to food, support for individuals, and community transport, and the main area of interest for continued activity is in supporting vulnerable members of the community.
- There's an appetite for continued community volunteering, but it depends upon the role and the context, the pandemic uniquely motivated many to volunteer for the first time but that does not necessarily mean they want, or are able, to continue to volunteer.
- Volunteer passports gained a mixed reaction, on the one hand many recognised the gains in not having to repeat recruitment processes, but concerns were expressed that volunteering is more nuanced, with volunteers often seeking to connect directly with one organisation.

Case study

Jane was a volunteer in a small town in Devon through the pandemic. She had previously volunteered a lot but was taking a volunteering hiatus when the pandemic struck. She joined the local mutual aid group which was very well organized. As Jane enjoys logistics she helped organize volunteer rotas and logistics. This was a fairly significant amount of work throughout the first 12 months of the pandemic but then began to tail off.

However the mutual aid group has started to take on new tasks in the community around food provision and Jane has continued to work with the group to support these new roles for the group and plans to continue to do this.

She is very impressed with her local mutual aid group and the extent to which they have formalized the group to continue into the future. She is aware that their town is reasonably privileged and although it does have poverty it also has a strong core of people with a range of expertise who were able to draw on their background and skills to run the group.

Jane thought the volunteer passport idea could be useful locally, and thought it would be especially good for new people coming into a community who may want to volunteer. Her sister is in this position having recently moved and Jane described how she has had to send of numerous times for references for different volunteering opportunities which becomes quite off putting.

3.0 Town Centre Bounce Back

In previous phases of our COVID-19 support, we have frequently heard concerns from communities with town centres or high streets about the potential significant negative impact of the pandemic and restrictions their retail provision and town centre area. However it was also recognised that re-opening offers the potential to build back better with a renewed focus on resilience in the community. This work package within Phase Five of our COVID-19 delivery aimed to support the ambition to build back better. Devon Communities Together initially set out to hold focus groups that bring together a number of towns with high streets in the Community Renewal Fund priority areas of Torridge and West Devon. However upon conversation with the Economic Development Officers in Torridge and West Devon District Councils, it was clear that the towns within these districts had a diversity of town centre types, differing stakeholder engagement, and various levels of engagement with regeneration as a concept, which led us to conclude a more individualised approach would be beneficial.

In Torridge, we worked with Economic Development Officer Chris Fuller to identify Bideford as best place to receive and benefit from a 'High Street Bounce Back' session. This decision was based upon Bideford having undertaken a theory of change exercise pre-COVID-19, to work towards town centre regeneration. It was felt that Bideford would particularly benefit from updating the document to reflect upon and understand the difference COVID-19 has made, and to create some simple actions arising from the impact of COVID-19 towards a more resilient town centre.

In West Devon, we worked with Sarah Gibson, Head of Placemaking at South Hams and West Devon District Councils. Here, there was not such a clear cut community that would benefit so we set out to make contact with the town councils of West Devon; Okehampton, Tavistock, Hatherleigh, and North Tawton. From this, and adding to previous work we have undertaken with Hatherleigh, we organised a facilitated stakeholder Town Centre Bounce Back session for Hatherleigh. We additionally had conversations with North Tawton and Okehampton that helped us to understand the situation in these towns which is the subject of section 3.2.

As part of our work to support the bounce back of Devon's high streets, Dr Louise MacAllister of Devon Communities Together has since joined the Urban Renewal Working group, convened by Kier Duffin, Regeneration Officer at Devon County Council. Louise has been able to add value to the aligned work of this group, providing insights from communities gained within this work package.

4.1 Okehampton and North Tawton conversations

Whilst the towns of Okehampton and North Tawton did not participate in workshops, we did have conversations with these towns in late May 2021 to help us to build a wider picture of the post-COVID-19 town centre and related support needs.

Okehampton is a small town, as of the 2011 census it had a population of just over 7,000 but has seen development since. Additionally Okehampton is the largest town on the northern side of Dartmoor and serves a number of local villages. At this point the clerk felt that there were a number of possible avenues to supporting the town centre recovery but that there was hesitancy in implementation due to uncertainty around the lifting of lockdown and public perceptions of safety. The Town Council is beginning to take some bookings for the public spaces they manage.

Okehampton does not have a chamber of commerce so one action that is being undertaken with support from Sarah Gibson, Head of Placemaking and South Hams and West Devon District Council is developing the setup of a Chamber of



Commerce or Business Improvement Community in the town. Secondly, an Okehampton Music Day is being planned with events in local venues and public spaces.

North Tawton is a very small town with a population as of the 2011 census of just under 2,000 (there have been a number of new homes built in the town since 2011, but it remains small). As a small town the majority of shops are 'essential' and therefore did not close during the pandemic. To that end, there has been far less of a negative economic impact upon the small town centre as a whole. Indeed during the pandemic two new businesses have successfully opened in North Tawton; a barbers and an arts and crafts social enterprise.

With little economic impact, the Town Council is focussing on small improvements that can maintain the high street area as a pleasant place, with new seating and planters planned. These small scale changes will certainly benefit the town centre but will not be transformative or support the long term resilience of the high street.

For both Okehampton and North Tawton, actions are generally cautious and small scale, but potentially could drive significant change with the right support. For example in Okehampton establishing a Chamber of Commerce has the potential to support innovative resilience amongst the business community. And in North Tawton, upgrading the Town Centre area could be used as a vehicle to work towards an improved shopping experience and renewed marketing. To fully reach the potential of these actions to have long term positive impact it is likely that additional support will be required to enable planning, goal setting based on local knowledge and wider risks, and action planning to realise these goals.

4.2 The Workshops

Two towns, Bideford and Hatherleigh, received in depth facilitated workshops and a follow up bespoke action planning report. The focus of both groups was on setting actions in manageable steps towards meaningful positive change. The bespoke action planning reports provided to the attending stakeholders form appendix two and three.

4.3.1 Bideford

Bideford has seen significant support around regeneration and this has included the production of a basic outcome focussed Theory of Change document produced by The Onion Collective (see appendix one). Based on discussions with the economic development lead at Torrington District Council, this document was used as the basis of the session to ensure that; our actions were building upon previous work rather than going over old ground, and that formed a clear structure to add on 'the difference that COVID-19 makes.

Stakeholders were invited from Bideford Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, from the wider business community, and from the charity sector where they have a stake in some way in the Town Centre. Before the session all attendees were sent the existing Theory of Change (ToC) document from The Onion Collective and set a task to identify their top five objectives in the document that they feel have been most impacted (either positively or negatively) by COVID-19.

With five attendees, the session then began with a discussion of those areas of impact, with the following ToC objectives identified by attendees as most impacted:

1. 1C.2- Events

Resource a coordinated programme of events in the town, park and quayside- maritime and folk festivals, wicked week,

2. 2C.1- Maritime

Implement an approach that places Bideford's maritime heritage and quayside / river asset centre stage in its visitor offer (pedestrianisation / places to sit / historic ships / river fountain / heritage centre)

3. 3C.3- Consult and involve

Commit that local authorities and partnership bodies will continue to consult and respond to those who live and work in the town

4. 1B.3- Empties

Establish a strategy for the active use of empty shops- incentives, meanwhile use, art / creativity, social value

5. 2A.1- Finding the High Street

Jubilee Square is repurposed as a welcoming hub on the quayside, with ASB problems resolved. Awnings, festoons, bunting and a "Covent Garden" archway entice visitors up the High Street and into town

6. 2D.2- River

Ensure the river can be used by many more people (i.e. canoes, boat hire, fishing trips)

7. 3A.1- Skills

Develop partnerships to ensure skills and education opportunities are available- i.e. Petroc operates a satellite campus

8. 3C.2- Business network

Relaunch the Chamber into a thriving and inclusive network for all kinds of businesses

9. 4A.3- Elderly and vulnerable

Create facilities that mean regular, accessible activities are available for the elderly- snooker, games, community cafes etc.

10. 4B.2- Theatre / cinema / event space

Build a community theatre and / or cinema that brings people together in shared experiences

11. 4B.3- Community projects and clubs

Ensure opportunities exist for people to come together for social good- volunteering opportunities, community and sports clubs

Due to the time constraints of the session we agreed to focus on the top three objective to consider closely, the impact of the pandemic on these objectives; challenges and opportunities; and to determine some simple actions that will enable post-pandemic progress towards the outcome.

The full report that has been given to the attending stakeholders can be found in appendix two. They key findings are reported here.

Events

- Events in Bideford have been impacted by the dual challenge of COVID-19 restrictions, and volunteer reluctance to support the events. The key challenge for events post CIVID-19 is getting volunteers to return to support these.
- The pause in events taking place does however give an opportunity to reflect and consider how these events can be done better.

- It was noted that there is not coordinated events listing for the town and the attendees have agreed to create an events listing, hosted by TVS.

Maritime

- The Maritime area has had a real increase in locals valuing their blue space during the pandemic, but this increased value has exacerbated existing spatial conflicts such as parking on the Quayside, and vessels deemed unattractive.
- However, to capitalise on the renewed interest, and with a number of maritime related organisations in the area, there is the potential to hold a maritime history day. Indeed one attendee, representing 'Way of the Wharves' had already drawn up a short outline of what such a day may look like and agreed to circulate with the group and other maritime stakeholders as the first step in realising the event.

Consult and involve

- Concern was expressed that during the pandemic, diverse voices have been reduced to those with power speaking for the wider population and giving skewed understandings of lived experiences during the pandemic.
- Attendees noted the importance of events as a way to carry out both informal (e.g. local councillors having conversations with the public), and formal (e.g. planned engagement activities), consultation.
- Bideford has yet to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and it was noted that progressing this will provide an opportunity for a large scale consultation exercise.

Without pre-intention, the group ended up focussing on events throughout. And while events in themselves have value for the area there are additional ways in which this can bring benefit. The establishment of new events such as a maritime history day gives opportunity to strengthen stakeholder relations, and the recognition of events as a catalyst and mechanism for community engagement provides the opportunity to review the way in which existing events work with the wider public.

Since the event, DCT have checked in with attendees and actions towards a maritime history day have been particularly furthered, both working towards providing an event, and the potential this holds for maximising the unique assets of Bideford.

4.3.2 Hatherleigh

In Hatherleigh, town councillors had recently undertaken a survey of businesses which had led to the formation of a Business Action Group which are taking on some actions around Hatherleigh's branding. Additionally, the Pannier Market new building has the potential to boost Hatherleigh's COVID-19 town centre bounce back. This workshop session was therefore designed to build upon these two opportunities with a workshop to bring together stakeholders from the town to ensure that these two opportunities were maximised.

The full report for Hatherleigh stakeholders' forms appendix 3, and the key findings are summarised here.

The Business Action Group

- During summer 2020, two town councillors undertook a survey of town centre businesses. Respondents had seen footfall fall during the pandemic and wanted to see improved signage, a town website, and emphasised the importance of the Tuesday Pannier Market.



- The key outcome of the survey has been the formation of the Business Action Group; comprised of a number of key stakeholders from the Hatherleigh businesses who responded to the survey. The Business Action Group has started their work by looking at a new town logo, and are seeking quotes for new signage.
- It was noted in the workshop that there are existing websites that represent the town in some way, but most importantly, any new website needs to have a sustainable plan for keeping it up to date.
- The survey results have so far been received by Hatherleigh Town Council but have not yet been disseminated to the public. An action arising is for the lead councillors on this to progress sharing the results with the business community and possibly the wider public with full council approval.

The New Pannier Market Building

- With the old pannier market site sold for development, the developers have committed to provide a new pannier market building but this will largely be a shell, enclosed only at one end and with most of the building without walls. There will be running water, but no toilets.
- It is felt that to ensure the best possible range of uses, and to guard against anti-social behaviour, walls and toilets are required. The developer will not fund these and therefore a working group of the Town Council has formed to explore funding options.
- It is recognised that a funded development phase is required to secure capital investment and the West Devon District Council Community Renewal Fund contains a provision for this should it be successful.

Hatherleigh has two opportunities to revitalise their town centre, both of which require planning and investment. It is important that as the work of the Business Action Group and the Pannier Market Working Group progress, that they consider opportunities to build in resilience for future unexpected events on the scale of the pandemic, and workshop attendees were prompted to consider this.

4.4 Supporting communities to build back better

The work with the towns of Bideford and Hatherleigh, and to a lesser extent, Okehampton and North Tawton, have raised several familiar themes in support needs in order to maximise opportunities to build back better.

Firstly, clear and localised networks to share information and work towards a vision. In both workshops there were benefits seen in bringing together key stakeholders, and where community wealth was valued beyond economic wealth. Where local relations are not strong, opportunities for development and innovation are low.

Secondly, and relatedly, increased engagement with the wider community is essential to both the success of various schemes and events, and to overcome the engagement deficit left by the pandemic. Community leaders need to develop strategies to engage with residents (with wider support as necessary) in order to build back better.

Finally, communities require clear and simple access to funding for projects that will make a tangible impact on building back a resilient local economy.

5.0 Communications

5.1 Website



From 1st April – July 19th DCT's website welcomed **11,498** visitors across all pages. Within the Coronavirus support section, the most visited pages were:

- Coronavirus information landing page: **838 views**
- Devon Community Resilience Forum online event: **733 views**
- Devon Community Resilience Forum landing page: **348 views**
- National guidance around re-opening village halls: **256 views**
- Advice for Village Halls and Community Buildings: **169 views**
- Devon Community Resilience forum resources: **146 views**
- Small registered charity grants: **146 views**

Looking at the Coronavirus information landing page, figures compared to the previous period were down slightly (approx. 9% lower) however, this is likely to reflect the fact that the previous period covered lockdown three and the further we moved through the pandemic and restrictions, the more knowledge and confidence people had amassed.

During this period, the main changes on the website have been updating the national guidance on re-opening village halls and removing mentions of the CV-19 helpline following its closure on 19th July.



CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION

PLEASE NOTE: AS OF 19TH JULY 2021, OUR CV-19 HELPLINE IS NOW CLOSED. WE ARE CONTINUING TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES IN A VARIETY OF WAYS THROUGH OUR PROJECTS AND SERVICES, AS WELL AS TAILORED SUPPORT FOR OUR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS.

MEMBERSHIP IS AVAILABLE FROM JUST £24 PER YEAR! FIND OUT MORE HERE.

5.2 e-communications



From 1st April – July 19th DCT issued **8 e-bulletins** to an average of **2,590 recipients** (max. 2,613 to min. 2,563).

These emails were opened a combined total of **5,363 opens** and **664 clicks** through for further information.



The e-bulletins covered a wide range of topics, including:

- Guidance around the Government roadmap out of lockdown
- Shared content from Devon County Council, including information videos in different languages
- Volunteering during and after Covid-19
- Changing guidance for Village Halls
- Funding opportunities including Return to Play grants, Woods into Management grants, The National Lottery Community Fund grants
- Sustainability initiatives looking to the future, eg England Tree Action Plan
- Out of school guidance
- Charity commission guidance
- Closure of the helpline and e-bulletin service

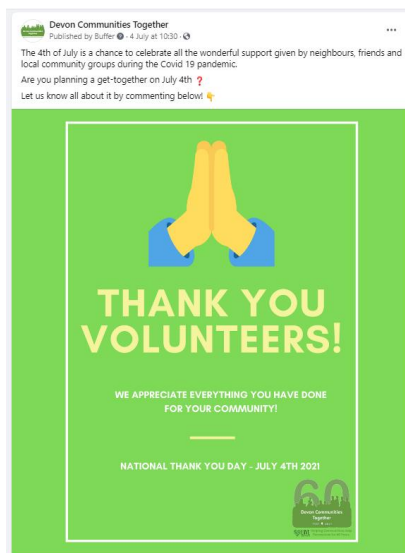
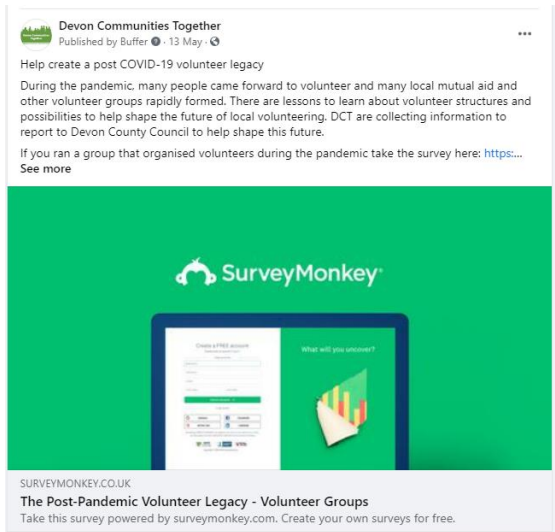
Example of an e-bulletin from June 2021

5.3 Social media



From 1st April – 19th July, DCT created and issued a total of **30** pieces of content across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn related to the helpline and wider CV-19 support.

The content **reached 4,905 people** on Facebook and **created 3,095 impressions** on Facebook and LinkedIn. Across all three platforms, the content was engaged with (liked/retweeted/shared) **97 times**.



Examples of social media content

6.0 Concluding summary; looking forward

Phase five represents the final stage of delivery for Devon Communities Together’s COVID-19 helpline, fittingly, activities have focussed on support to build in a positive post-COVID-19 legacy and maximising the opportunity to build back better. While on our helpline we identified a shift towards reopening and the planning for the future. While many community organisations are returning we have seen a need for reassurance, clarity of guidance, and access to grant funding to enable the return of activities.

COVID-19 and lockdowns have catalysed community voluntary groups, many of whom are continuing to provide valuable support in the community. These groups are often self-sufficient and flexible, however centralised support has the ability to maximise their impact and improve their processes.

Town centres across Devon are emerging from the pandemic with a huge variation in support need and ability to build back better, and further intelligence from within communities would enable an asset and place based approach to building back better. Devon Communities Together will continue to work with the Urban Renewal Working Group on their high street support exercise.

The Devon Community Resilience Forum (DCRF), managed by Devon Communities Together, supports communities to develop community emergency plans to tackle a range of risks. The number of communities that included pandemic risk planning prior to 2020 was low. This number is now rising, and we continue to support community emergency planning groups to put in place actions to mitigate the community impact in the event of a future pandemic.

7.0 Appendices

7.1 The Onion Collective's theory of change document for Bideford

1. PERSONALITY & IDENTITY	2. INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS	3. AGENCY & ENTERPRISE	4. COMMUNITY & CONNECTEDNESS
<p>1A.1- Share Promote, discuss and adopt a shared vision of an ambitious, consolidated offer for the town as widely as possible within the community</p> <p>1A.2- Include Wien the Governance Board for the bid and involve different voices in the project. Establish clear lines of communication and transparency for the community / businesses</p> <p>1A.3- Green Develop and implement an ambitious zero carbon plan that helps redefine the town's identity as a leading green centre</p> <p>1B.1- Independents Establish a policy for the encouragement and promotion of independent shops (including Creatives and food / small producers) around Mill Street and Cooper Street</p> <p>1B.2- Charity Treat charity shops as an asset and attraction- a marker of Bideford as a caring place- encourage consolidation onto the High Street.</p> <p>1B.3- Empties Establish a strategy for the active use of empty shops- incentives, meanwhile use, art / creativity, social value</p> <p>1C.1- Venue Establish a significant cultural venue for music, theatre, events and gatherings</p> <p>1C.2- Events Resource a coordinated programme of events in the town, park and quayside- maritime and folk festivals, wicked week, sports events, new years eve, bike show etc</p> <p>1C.3- Animate Support activities that animate the town centre- street theatre, busking, performance</p> <p>1D.1- Brand Develop a brand for the town that reflects its "personality" based on a shared vision</p> <p>1D.2- Promote Resource the promotion and marketing of Bideford as a place to visit / enjoy</p> <p>1D.3- Manage Resource and recruit a town / activity manager to coordinate delivery of the vision on the ground</p>	<p>2A.1- Finding the High Street Jubilee Square is repurposed as a welcoming hub on the quayside, with ASB problems resolved. Awnings, festoons, bunting and a "Covent Garden" archway entice visitors up the High Street and into town</p> <p>2A.2- Street scene Paint shop fronts (and backs) tastefully / joyfully and take care of public spaces (including fixing pavements for accessibility)</p> <p>2A.3- Public toilets Redevelop Bideford's public toilets as the best in the west- not necessarily in the current location (replace / reconfigure)</p> <p>2B.1- Signage Install attractive signage and signposting that makes it clear what Bideford has to offer and how to find it easily. Make the TIC easy to find.</p> <p>2B.2- Access Create a network of bus routes, cycle routes, electric bikes, boats / water taxi and even e-trikes and e-scooters to offer easy ways to get to and around the town. Enable more tourist accommodation in the town. Pedestrianise more areas.</p> <p>2B.3- Parking Improve parking to be well-signed and free for 1-2 hour stays to encourage locals to use the town</p> <p>2C.1- Maritime Implement an approach that places Bideford's maritime heritage and quayside / river asset centre stage in its visitor offer (pedestrianisation / places to sit / historic ships / river fountain / heritage centre)</p> <p>2C.2- Architectural Restore architecturally significant buildings with new purposes</p> <p>2D.1- Nature Place Bideford at the heart of the Biosphere project, improve connectivity and promote usage of the Tarka Trail, invest in an eBikes scheme</p> <p>2D.2- River Ensure the river can be used by many more people (i.e. canoes, boat hire, fishing trips)</p> <p>2D.3- Outdoors Generate events at Victoria Park, plant the quayside vibrantly, create a walkway along East-the-Water river bank (with linkages between the two banks)</p>	<p>3A.1- Skills Develop partnerships to ensure skills and education opportunities are available- i.e. Petroc operates a satellite campus</p> <p>3A.2- Progression Provide businesses with support and encouragement around apprenticeships and progression routes</p> <p>3A.3- Markets Implement a market strategy so that markets of all kinds are supported and established- farmers, food, antiques, creative</p> <p>3B.1- Start-up Provide support for the establishment of micro-businesses and start-ups</p> <p>3B.2- Space Create space for a thriving start-up, early stage and maker / creative scene of new businesses. Explore the potential of live-work and co-working.</p> <p>3B.3- Social enterprise Ensure social enterprise development support is provided and opportunities exist for networking, peer and collective help</p> <p>3C.1- Collective endeavour Create spaces where people can come together to make a difference through social action, community enterprise, collective ownership</p> <p>3C.2- Business network Relaunch the Chamber into a thriving and inclusive network for all kinds of businesses</p> <p>3C.3- Consult and involve Commit that local authorities and partnership bodies will continue to consult and respond to those who live and work in the town</p> <p>3D.1- Progress Schedule regular surveys to monitor for an increase in community agency, pride and positivity over time</p> <p>3D.2- Press Target that Bideford is featured in the national press as a success story for small town regeneration</p> <p>3D.3- Success Plan for success in the Future High Street Fund as just the first of many wins that catalyse change and revival for the town.</p>	<p>4A.1- Services and support Support social sector organisations to provide joined-up services to those in need at appropriate locations</p> <p>4A.2- Young people and families Provide young people with their own space, which is safe, secluded and supported. Encourage activities for families to be available- city farm, play spaces, climbing wall, skatepark</p> <p>4A.3- Elderly and vulnerable Create facilities that mean regular, accessible activities are available for the elderly- snooker, games, community cafes etc</p> <p>4B.1- Community garden Create a community garden / growing space to enable people to come together in nature</p> <p>4B.2- Theatre / cinema / event space Build a community theatre and / or cinema that brings people together in shared experiences</p> <p>4B.3- Community projects and clubs Ensure opportunities exist for people to come together for social good- volunteering opportunities, community and sports clubs</p> <p>4C.1- Multi-use Establish and manage an indoor / outdoor multi-use space that is used by a wide range of organisations and activities- focus on social connectivity.</p> <p>4C.2- Eating together Create opportunities for people to share meals together- thriving restaurants, community café / kitchen, food and pop-up hub, continental bar culture</p> <p>4C.3- Inclusive Create public spaces that are actively inclusive, encouraging openness and connectivity, countering the risk of division</p>

Bideford Build Back Better; Report on the meeting 9 June 2021

Dr Louise MacAllister

Hannah Reynolds

Devon Communities Together

Attendance:

- Cllr Peter Christie (Bideford Town Council)
- Cllr Jude Gubb (Bideford Town Council)
- John Puddy (Bideford Chamber of Commerce)
- Paul Huxtable (TTVS)
- Michael Teare (Way of the Wharves)
- Louise MacAllister (facilitation)
- Hannah Reynolds (notes)
- Meeting was recorded by Zoom

1. Introduction

This session was set up to reflect upon and discuss the elements of Bideford town centre that have been most affected by COVID-19. The session was structured using the pre-existing Theory of Change (ToC) carried out in the town by The Onion Collective. The session reviewed the ToC asking the critical question ‘What difference does COVID-19 make?’

The session aims to support Bideford Town Council and town centre stakeholders to action plan in order to enhance the town centre.

It supports Torridge District Council to evidence funding opportunities for the town, and it supports Devon County Council to understand the needs of Devon’s high streets post COVID-19.

2. ‘What difference does COVID-19 make’; building on the from Theory of Change Document

Using the ToC document previously created for Bideford by The Onion Collective, attendees considered which of the objectives listed in the ToC are most impacted by COVID-19 and resultant lockdowns, it is emphasised here that COVID-19 related impact may be both positive, creating opportunities, and negative, generating new hurdles to overcome. The following objectives were identified as those which have been impacted:

12. 1C.2- Events

Resource a coordinated programme of events in the town, park and quayside- maritime and folk festivals, wicked week,

13. 2C.1- Maritime

Implement an approach that places Bideford's maritime heritage and quayside / river asset centre stage in its visitor offer (pedestrianisation / places to sit / historic ships / river fountain / heritage centre)

14. 3C.3- Consult and involve

Commit that local authorities and partnership bodies will continue to consult and respond to those who live and work in the town

15. 1B.3- Empties

Establish a strategy for the active use of empty shops- incentives, meanwhile use, art / creativity, social value

16. 2A.1- Finding the High Street

Jubilee Square is repurposed as a welcoming hub on the quayside, with ASB problems resolved. Awnings, festoons, bunting and a "Covent Garden" archway entice visitors up the High Street and into town

17. 2D.2- River

Ensure the river can be used by many more people (i.e. canoes, boat hire, fishing trips)

18. 3A.1- Skills

Develop partnerships to ensure skills and education opportunities are available- i.e. Petroc operates a satellite campus

19. 3C.2- Business network

Relaunch the Chamber into a thriving and inclusive network for all kinds of businesses

20. 4A.3- Elderly and vulnerable

Create facilities that mean regular, accessible activities are available for the elderly- snooker, games, community cafes etc.

21. 4B.2- Theatre / cinema / event space

Build a community theatre and / or cinema that brings people together in shared experiences

22. 4B.3- Community projects and clubs

Ensure opportunities exist for people to come together for social good- volunteering opportunities, community and sports clubs

Due to time constraints in the session it was agreed to focus on the top 3 areas which had been selected by more than one attendee; 'events', 'maritime', and 'consult and involve'.

3. Events

3.1 How has COVID-19 impacted on events in Bideford area?

Respondents noted that there are a vast number of events that would have happened but haven't happened because of COVID-19. This is inevitable but a knock on impact of this is that the momentum used to sustain annual events has been broken.

Further, many events rely on volunteer organisers and there appears to be a reluctance for volunteers to return to these roles due to anxiety around public events.

Despite these challenges the Steamship Trust opened last Sunday for first time since lockdown. Very stringent COVID-19 safety measures were applied and 75 visitors attended. It was noted that safety is a key element. If people feel safe, they will re-engage and therefore events have to ensure they are clearly ensuring COVID-19 secure protocols are in place and being actioned.

In discussion, attendees noted that events in the town are disparate and the 'Bideford events offer' could be strengthened by collating the events calendar.

3.2 What is the top challenge for events due to COVID-19?

The key issue is how to re-invigorate the voluntary sector and volunteers to want to organise and take part in events. There is some conflict between those who want to push on with events and those who are cautious. For example this has been seen with the Bideford Carnival which has also found the usual groups that help and organise floats are not all operating.

Top Challenge

How to find volunteers and re-invigorate appetite for volunteering and organising events.

3.3 What opportunities has the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns raised for events?

There has been a positive element in that the lockdown time has given voluntary groups time to think how they could do things differently; an opportunity to reflect and somewhat reinvent ourselves.

Other opportunities noted here are that many organisations have funds saved so do not have financial constraints on event organisation, and that although volunteers may be reluctant to return to events, we have seen an upsurge in volunteering generally through the pandemic.

Top Opportunity

An enforced chance to stop and reflect on how things can be done differently

3.4 Actions

- **TTVS to collate a calendar of events and publicise via their website and the own Council. All attendees agreed not only to send Paul Huxtable their event listings but to liaise with other organisations and key stakeholders to request the same.**
- **Future consideration; the development of a central and accessible 'guide' for community groups who would like to organise an event in Bideford including information on permissions, sources of grant aid, insurance, and how to get your event listed on the newly developed calendar.**

4. Maritime

4.1 How has COVID-19 impacted on the maritime offer in Bideford?

Maritime interest groups in the Bideford area have largely been on hold since the start of the pandemic. However the maritime areas have seen an increase of local interest as the pandemic prompted a heightened appreciation for the local environment.

4.2 What is the top challenge for the maritime offer due to COVID-19?

A number of pre-existing challenges remain such as a conflict with parking on Quayside spoiling the outlook but raising revenue for the District Council and offering town centre parking, and the challenge of unattractive vessels berthed in locations where it could be possible to have, for example, historical visiting ships.

It was also noted that there are a number of separate maritime interest groups and co-ordination would improve the offer, potentially through a Maritime Heritage Day.

Top Challenge

How to enhance the outlook on the Quayside

4.3 What are the opportunities for the maritime offer following COVID-19?

It is noted that COVID-19 has prompted an immense interest in the local environment and renewed appreciation of the special features in the places we live.

As with events, there is also an opportunity for the groups involved in maritime heritage to spend time reflecting and improving their offer.

4.4 Actions

- a) **Mike Teare has already drafted a half page plan for a Maritime History Day so is actioned with sharing that plan with others in the group and key stakeholders as the first step towards bringing together key stakeholders to work towards a Maritime Heritage Day.**

5. Consult and Involve the Wider Public

5.1 How has COVID-19 impacted on consulting and involving the wider public in Bideford?

Consultation through informal routes with the public coming together and discussing/sharing information has not been possible during COVID-19. Therefore a consolidation of power to speak for the community amongst a few organisations such as the 'One' branded groups has been consolidated. This means that smaller groups and the wider public have not been represented and the groups that speak for them are not necessarily in touch with their realities.

5.2 What is the top challenge for the involving the wider public post-COVID-19 in Bideford?

Top Challenge

How can that power and influence be brought back to the smaller groups and wider public so that other voices are heard, too?

5.3 What are the opportunities for the maritime offer involving the public following COVID-19 in Bideford?

The group discussed engaging people where they go anyway, but particularly with some events starting back, e.g. Bideford Fair and the Water Festival.

Top Opportunity

Use a return to events to reinvigorate bottom up participation

5.4 Actions

- a) **Consider how to best engage with the public at key events**
- b) **Continue to work to progress to neighbourhood plan for Bideford which provides opportunity for consultation on a range of issues.**

5. Summary

COVID-19 has brought challenges to Bideford town centre area but also opportunities to build back better. Many of the Theory of Change document outcomes are impacted by the pandemic and 11 were identified by attendees as particularly impacted.

Challenges arising from the pandemic are directly related to the pandemic enforced need not to socialise so there have been fewer interactions. However it has brought an opportunity for community groups to reflect on their 'normal' activities and has also brought a greater appreciation amongst residents of the natural and heritage assets in the area they live which can be used as a springboard to build back better.

Actions recap:

- **TTVS to collate a calendar of events and publicise via their website and the own Council. All attendees agreed not only to send Paul Huxtable their event listings but to liaise with other organisations and key stakeholders to request the same.**
- **Future consideration; the development of a central and accessible 'guide' for community groups who would like to organise an event in Bideford including information on permissions, sources of grant aid, insurance, and how to get your event listed on the newly developed calendar.**
- **Mike Teare has already drafted a half page plan for a Maritime History Day so is actioned with sharing that plan with others in the group and key stakeholders as the first step towards bringing together key stakeholders to work towards a Maritime Heritage Day**

- Consider how to best engage with the public at key events
- Continue to work to progress to neighbourhood plan for Bideford which provides opportunity for consultation on a range of issues.

7.3. The Hatherleigh post-workshop action based report for stakeholders

Hatherleigh Build Back Better Report on the meeting 9 June 2021

Hannah Reynolds

Dr Louise MacAllister

Devon Communities Together

Attendance:

- Charles Dumpleton – Ruby Country/Visitor Centre
- Clare Tyson – Mayor, Hatherleigh TC
- Peter Back - HTC
- Rosemary Lock – HTC Clerk
- Ellie Holland – HTC
- Kay Walters - HTC
- Patrick Kimber – WDDC Cllr
- Paul Bolland - HTC
- Mark Reddaway – Hatherleigh resident/carnival
- Callum Entwistle - HTC
- Sarah Gibson - SH/WDDC
- James McInnes – DCC Cllr
- Louise MacAllister, Devon Communities Together, notes
- Hannah Reynolds, Devon Communities Together, Facilitator

3. Introduction

This session was set up to report on progress by the Hatherleigh Business Action Group in taking forward action points arising from a recent survey of Hatherleigh town centre businesses. The survey had been developed by town councillors to assess what support would be needed by Hatherleigh businesses to enable Hatherleigh to bounce back from the negative effects of COVID-19. The meeting was also planned to discuss opportunities to enhance the new pannier market building being made available through housing development Section 106 agreement.

An invitation to attend the session was sent by town Mayor Clare Tyson to Town and Borough Councillors and other key stakeholders in the future economy of Hatherleigh and this area of West Devon, including Borough Council officers preparing funding bids.

4. Business Action Group; status update and action

2.1 Business Action Group Update

A survey of businesses within Hatherleigh has been conducted by Cllrs Entwistle and Holland who presented on the survey results. The survey was undertaken with financial support from WDDC COVID-19 recovery support during 2020.

Businesses were asked in the survey about support, recognition, events, publicity, signage, and COVID-19 impact. There were a total of 11 respondents which is approximately a response rate of one third. Responses emphasized need for a better town website and signage. In terms of signage improvements needed include:

- to gateway signage for visitors
- signage around town, including finger point signage.

All survey respondents indicated that footfall had fallen in during the pandemic, and the importance for business of the Tuesday market.

The key outcome of the survey has been the formation of the Business Action Group; comprised of a number of key stakeholders from the Hatherleigh businesses who responded to the survey. The Business Action Group has started their work by looking at a new town logo, and are seeking quotes for new signage. The survey results have so far been received by Hatherleigh Town Council but have not yet been disseminated to the public.

2.2 Business Action Group discussion

One comment was made that Hatherleigh has a number of websites which vary in the offer, but they all need regular updating and they are not getting it, joining the existing websites up and ensuring they are regularly updated is of importance, arguably more so than starting a new site from scratch. Upon looking at a Hatherleigh business listing website, for example, some of the businesses were no longer trading. It was recognised that the website for the area with its branding of 'Ruby Country' was very Holsworthy focused but there was now an



opportunity to update the Ruby Country site with more Hatherleigh- focused material, logo, branding and other information to encourage visitors to come to the town. However it should be noted that none of the responders to the businesses survey mentioned Ruby Country or being part of a Ruby Country brand. It may be that for businesses a website for Hatherleigh should have Hatherleigh in its title.

Support need identified – The Ruby Country website and other websites in town need to not only exist but have resource to keep up to date and relevant

Cllrs Entwistle and Holland were asked to comment why some town businesses did not respond to the survey. It was agreed that some businesses just did not see the importance against their other priorities during the pandemic. It was noted that that the out of date map in the car park will be updated by Hatherleigh Town Council upon completion of the new pannier market. Cllr Entwistle clarified that the Ruby Country brand did not get mentioned by survey respondents

Actions

1. Action point one – website development to progress with consideration to the existing websites and fundamental need for website update ownership. Sarah Gibson offered support to update the Ruby Country website – Charles Dumpleton to contact.
2. Action point two. Cllrs Entwistle and Holland to discuss at next Town Council meeting the sharing with the public, especially business community, the survey results and actions that have since arisen e.g. through the Hatherleigh website and other methods.

5. Market progress update from Cllr Clare Tyson (Town Mayor)

The new Pannier Market building has been approved next to the car park. It will have one end enclosed for the auction and rest of the building will be open; not weatherproof or secure. As a private enterprise the market has no long term secure future for the community.

There are 30-40 stalls per week operating on the old site. This will soon close and move to a temporary marquee without the auction as there is not enough space in the marquee. The market manager hopes to expand the use of the new building beyond that of pannier market to a community space, more markets e.g. farmers market etc., generating increased footfall to benefit all Hatherleigh businesses. However an open sided building is not best placed to realise this full opportunity.

Further, there are concerns that without walls there are anti-social behaviour risks and no storage space. With walls the building will be easier to insure, easier to manage, and have more space use opportunities. The aim is therefore to progress to have a fit for purpose building with a fully enclosed lockable building suitable for a



range of business and community uses and plans in place for long term community security of the market. This will require significant funding.

A working group has been created to explore funding opportunities and the group has begun by creating a wish list such as walls, shutters, toilets, feature walls. The developers (Kingswood) have been liaised with to confirm exactly what they will and will not provide under S106; they are providing many things e.g. roof, electrics, separation wall, water supply, drains, but no toilets, and no walls on the main building. There is no chance of movement from Kingswood, if the community wants walls they will have to pay for both the walls and the amendments or new planning application (whether it is an amendment or a new application will depend on what is to be included). There are considerable costs involved and as yet unsubstantiated figures ranging from £70,000 to £300,000 being mentioned. Future management and ownership of the building also needs to be secured and this is being progressed.

Additionally, the Town Council has joined The National Association of British Markets for support, and had some advice from Devon Communities Together on approaches to securing funding. Cllr Tyson has sent a number of funding request letters to organisations and undertaken funding searches but no clear path to funds has emerged. She has engaged with West Devon Borough Council, Devon County Council and has been in contact with their DCC Economic Development Officer, - Diverse Regeneration <https://www.drcompany.co.uk/> has been asked to help with revenue and capital funding searches but there is no clear funding source identified through this route either. An email has been sent to the National Lottery Partnership Fund asking if they will consider them for a capital grant, answer pending. The final option is that Hatherleigh Town Council could take out a public works loan board loan and raise the precept to pay it back. They have already done this successfully over some years for building a new Community Centre.

There is clearly a need for big capital funding, but, additionally, in order to access this a development phase is needed to do the business planning work, consultation, options appraisals and finding readiness activities to ensure capital funding can be successfully obtained. The town has successfully raised funds before via a Public Works Loan Board loan that was taken out some time ago for the Hatherleigh Community Centre. There is therefore precedent and some experience of loan funding in the town. The Community Centre loan was done without building ownership as per the situation with the pannier market new building. However although £70,000 would be feasible to consider with the related precept rise, £300,000 would not be.

It was noted with thanks that West Devon Borough Council is adding in a very small development phase for Hatherleigh Market to the Community Renewal Fund bid for West Devon area. If that is approved by Devon County Council the next step is for the bid to go to central government consideration. The importance of community led development and consultation was emphasized.

The meeting was also updated on the 'Eco Museum' for WDDC which will consider the Tamar AONB, Dartmoor, Ruby Country area, and future travel to work area, which will bring future benefit to Hatherleigh if it proceeds.



Actions

Action point three - WDDC will submit a CRF application with Hatherleigh pannier market development phase included.

Action Point four – West Devon Borough Council will send a copy of the CRF application to Cllr James McInnes in order that he can pledge support for the Hatherleigh elements.

6. Other priority areas

The importance of work hubs was raised, to be considered by the Business Action Group as part of their action Plan. It was noted that a business from Holecourt Business units was part of the Business Action Group.

Devon Communities Together gave a prompt to attendees to be aware of longer term resilience and large scale challenges when thinking through Business Action Group activities and Pannier Market development.