

Draft Minutes
Northern Devon Futures
Tuesday 10 June 2025
9.30-12.00

In Person Meeting at Caddsdawn Business Park, Bideford

Attendees

Peter Morrish (Chair) – Condition Monitoring Technology Group
Steven Lodge – Westward Housing
Matt Lane – Office of Sir Geoffrey Cox MP
Marie Gould – North Devon Voluntary Service NDVS and Chair of Community & Place NDF Action Group
Andy Bell – North Devon Biosphere and Chair of the Climate NDF Action Group
Steve Hearse – Chief Executive, Torrington District Council
Sarah Jane M – North Devon Council
Ken James – Leader, Torrington District Council
Alison Mills – North Devon Council / Culture Group
Bill Blythe – Petroc
Kelly Brend – Saunton Sands and Co-Chair of Economy, Innovation and Skills NDF Action Group
Alan Dykes - TDK Lambda
Tim Jones - Chair of the Great South West Internationalisation Board
Katherine Allen - One Northern Devon and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Marc Rostock - North Devon Homes Ltd (virtual)
Richard Light – Tarka Learning Partnership (virtual)
Helen Bone – Homes England (virtual)
Ewan Seer – Devon & Cornwall Police (virtual)
Kurt Hintz – Petroc (virtual)
Andrea Beecham – One Northern Devon and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (virtual)
Ken Miles - Chief Executive North Devon Council (virtual)

In attendance

Jon Walter – Torrington District Council
Dominie Dunbrook – North Devon Council
Karen Hewlett – Torrington District Council
Kirsty Brown – Torrington District Council
Chris Fuller – Torrington District Council
Donna Sibley – North Devon Council and Torrington District Council

Meeting Started 9:34

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following Board members:

Sir Geoffrey Cox MP for Torridge & Tavistock, Matt Lane in attendance on his behalf.

Ian Roome MP for North Devon

Stuart Brocklehurst

Donna Manson

Keri Denton

Alex Farmery

Michael Matthews

Philip Butterworth

Emma Butler-Jones, D&C Police – Ewan Seer attended on her behalf.

Joe Wharton

2. Declaration of Interests

Members were reminded to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests related to the agenda items that were discussed. None received.

3. Minutes and Actions

The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 06 March 2025 and Chair reviewed the actions from the meeting:

No.	Action	Owner	Due Date	Status/update
1.	OND Health & Wellbeing work planned with junior schools on mental health provision to be progressed in conjunction with the Children & Young People's Action Group of NDF.	Action Group Chairs	06 March 2025	10-06-25 – Kurt H provided an update on progress.
2.	Connect to Work and Get Britain working agenda item for One Northern Devon	KD/Chair	06 March 2025	10-06-25 – Chair to chase Keri Denton.
3.	Explore the role of the Cultural Partnership within the 6 action groups.	AM / Chair		
4.	Presentation slides from the meeting on 10 th June to be shared with the Board	Secretariat/JW/Chair/KA		
5.	Housing & Infrastructure Action Group KPIs - DD to discuss with MR	DD/MR		
6.	Local Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from Away Day shared with Planning Teams 	SJ /Chair		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member briefing and Local Development Scheme to be shared with the Board. • Meeting to discuss how NDF continue to feed into progress on the Local PAn 			
7.	AI - Dedicated session for NDF Board and consideration within Action Groups.	Chair / Secretariat		
8.	Agenda item for the next NDF Board – Implementation of KPIs	Chair / Secretariat		
9.	<p>Response to the Devon & Torbay Growth Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board to provide feedback by Friday 13 June. • Collation and formulation of response for 20th June deadline. • NDF response to be sent to both MPs. 	<p>Board members</p> <p>Chair / KM / SH / CF / DD</p>		
10.	Explore adapting the Torridge Place story for wider Northern Devon place story.	KM / SH		
11.	KJ & MG to make contact about Holsworthy Youth Centre.	KJ / MG		

The Board were directed to page 3 of the minutes and it was confirmed that a vacancy for the Chair for the Economy Innovation and Skills Action Group had been filled. The Chair introduced and welcomed Kelly Brend, and advised she would Co-Chair alongside Mike Matthews.

Donna Sibley joined the meeting at 09:41

4. Update on NDF / OND collaboration

KA provided a detailed presentation on the draft partnership strategy 'Thriving in Northern Devon', which aims to integrate the visions of Northern Devon Futures (NDF) and One Northern Devon (OND) into one joint vision and partnership mission.

It was confirmed the strategy includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) presented to the Board today and these would act as the baseline for the action

groups. It was explained the intention was to provide a clear framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the partnership's initiatives and actions.

Discussion from the Away Day was highlighted for the Board and the new joint vision and partnership mission were explained. The strategic projects and their connections were then highlighted, along with the aims and objectives of the action groups.

KA advised the final version would be shared with the Board and Chair asked the Board for their feedback via email.

A brief discussion followed the presentation, during which it was agreed that a regular agenda slot would be created for updates from the Cultural Partnership Board. It was also agreed that cultural activity, given its cross-cutting nature, would be reflected in the NDF strategy and delivery without the need for a separate group.

5. Outputs from Chairs and Secretariats Away Day – Objectives and Priorities and KPI's

Chair presented a summary of the Chairs and Secretariats Away Day held in May, it was explained that the aim was to foster greater collaboration between the One Northern Devon (OND) and North Devon Futures (NDF) Boards. The outcomes of the day were highlighted – including the agreement of the 6 action groups, the development of a draft joint strategy and identification of the initial KPIs.

Chair thanked David Relph and Petroc, who provided time to help with the facilitation of the day, along with Bill Blythe and the team, Katherine and Andrea.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Chair provided an overview of the discussion on KPIs at the Away Day. JW went on to provide detail of the KPIs identified, and what informed the selection - noting the Northern Devon Economic Strategy and Levelling Up work.

JW went onto summarise the selected KPIs and what they aim to measure and the considerations of the Board:

The Competitive Index - it was felt to be a good benchmark in terms of the placement of North Devon and Torrington, with the overall aim to improve on this placement.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) & Gross Value Added (GVA) – There was discussion regarding the close correlation between the two and whether import/export ratios could be considered as a more reliable indicator for the area.

Median Gross Annual Pay and Median House Prices - there was discussion in terms of what these 2 measures are indicating for the 2 areas. Delivery of affordable housing and the economic development of the area was seen as a positive metric to explore. HB noted Combined County Authority (CCA) work with

East Devon on tracking affordable housing. MR also noted the CCA work and noted the Devon Housing Commission report.

Life expectancy – KA explained this measure and it was confirmed that figures for Northern Devon would be provided.

Educational Attainment – Level 3 and 4 statistics were shared and explained for the Board –it was confirmed that both were also in the Levelling up bid and Northern Devon Economic Strategy.

The Board discussed the accuracy of KPIs as a stand-alone, and the need for trend analysis to be built in to the measures for Action Groups; to demonstrate the impact of any change. There was consensus from the Board, whilst also recognising that the intention of the KPI measures discussed was to set the baseline to measure from.

Marie noted her report on the Community Life Survey and explained her reasoning for having this as a strategic KPI for the Community Action Group. There was agreement from the Board on this.

CF confirmed that trend analysis was in place for the Economic Strategy and updated the Board on this, specifically in terms of competitiveness.

Chair thanked JW for his work on this item, and it was agreed for the presentation slides to be shared with the Board following the meeting.

Away Day Discussion on Local Plan and Action Group Alignment

Chair went on to explain Away Day discussion on the Local Plan and how the Board members and action groups could be involved in development work.

Alison Mills, representing the Cultural Partnership for Northern Devon, was also introduced to the Board and Chair noted the importance of the role across the 6 actions groups.

Collaborative Projects for 2025-26

Chair explained how the Away Day identified the main projects NDF and OND could work on delivering the next 18-months, for reporting back to the Board.

The areas for collaborative projects were highlighted as:

- Local curriculum linked to local careers
- Understanding and addressing barriers for young people
- Energy Plan for Northern Devon
- Closing the Gap – support for the most disadvantaged 20%
- Rural transport solutions
- Local Plan development and alignment

These were also summarised for the Board and members of the Action Groups provided further detail on some of the projects and potential cross over.

There was a detailed discussion in relation to the local curriculum and local career opportunities. CF advised that the EIS action group were looking at best practice from Torbay and how this could be replicated locally. The Board were supportive of a more collaborative and curriculum-based approach. However, the requirements of the new national curriculum were noted as a consideration. The links to the CYP action group were also recognised in terms of T-Level and Work Experience.

AB provided an update on the "Closing the Gap" initiative, which focuses on improving access to services for the most disadvantaged 20% of the population. The next steps were outlined, including the identification of a representative from each organisation to join the action group. It was explained that each organisation would then develop a tailored plan, and these plans would be coordinated to collectively support the overall goals of the project.

Chair noted the establishment of the Housing and Infrastructure Action Group and advised of the initial discussion of the group at the away day. The importance of linking to the Local Plan was recognised and DD arranged to meet with MR to discuss KPIs for the group following the away day.

SJ went on to advise the Board of a planned meeting with DCC Local Highways in terms of the local plan, with the aim of linking to the Transport Plan and establish stronger links and to raise visibility. SJ confirmed she would feedback to the Board on these conversations.

Next Steps

Chair summarised the next steps for the 6 action groups following the away day and advised the presentation from today would be shared with the Board. Phase one was explained in terms of these next steps.

There was a discussion on the role of AI and robotics across all six Action Groups, considering their growing impact on local industries. The Board agreed to explore this further in future agendas and acknowledged the importance of integrating AI into the Board's and Action Groups' work.

Following discussion, the Chair supported the idea of a dedicated session on AI for the Board and consideration of AI within Action Group targets.

In summing up the Chair confirmed the next meeting agenda would include a focussed discussion on the implementation of KPI strategies.

6. Local Plan Update

SJ provided an update on the Local Plan and advised that 2 documents would be shared with the Board following the meeting – the local development scheme, which set out the planned timescales and a member briefing note for North Devon Councillors.

It was explained that the planning teams are preparing for the start date, pending confirmation from the Government regarding changes to the plan-making system. Key activities include:

- Conducting a housing and economic land availability assessment, including a call for sites.
- Preparing an interim report for publishing on the call for sites.
- Exploring collaboration opportunities through thematic working groups of the Local Plan and the need to maintain alignment with the NDF action groups.
- Meeting with the Planning teams and feedback on the Away Day.

TJ questioned the flexibility of the Local Plan given the potential impact of any government mandates and the local market realities. SJ saw this as a potential role for NDF - in informing the Local Plan and addressing deliverability challenges. The early stage of development was noted, and the importance of addressing the issues and challenging going forward through the process was stated.

AB noted the UNESCO status for the area and the importance of pushing back and emphasising the specialness of the area within the Local Plan and ensuring good policy decision.

The Board discussed the evaluation and monitoring of the impact of the previous local plan, in the development of the new local plan and the Chair then summed up recognising the role of the Board in working together to inform the process. It was agreed that SJ and Chair would meet to discuss how the Board and action groups feedback into discussion.

7. NDF Response to the Devon and Torbay Growth Plan

KM provided the Board with some background on the development of the Devon and Torbay Growth Plan, which came from the CCA and their subgroup – the Business Advisory Group. Timescales were detailed and it was confirmed that consultation closed on the 20th June – the shortness of the timescales were noted.

It was explained that the document aimed to show how Devon and Torbay planned to contribute to the Government growth plan and set priorities, and its potential use in terms of funding allocation was noted.

It was confirmed, because of the short timescales, both Council's had informally consulted with members. It was felt that NDF should also provide a response in terms of the document and how it represents Northern Devon.

KM and SH went on to highlight some of the concerns being raised and advised that a consultation response was being formulated through DD and CF.

There was concern that a lack of focus on Northern Devon in the document could have a potential impact for the area in terms of funding. It was also noted that the report tended to focus on the deprivation in the Northern Devon, without

advice how this could be improved / managed – again this was felt detrimental for future funding opportunities.

The Chair highlighted the feedback from the Board and EIS action group complied so far:

- More clarity regarding the South West Innovation Spine and how it connects to Northern Devon, concerns around Northern Devon being missed.
- No mention of closure of the inequality gap, mobility and access to opportunity.
- There was felt to be a lack of success stories.
- AI isn't adequately considered as an industry or area of growth.
- No mention of the successful Torridge Levelling Up bid.
- Micro-businesses and the skills pathway, number of businesses enabled through working from home all were missing
- Business Tourism was missing sector.
- Apprenticeships weren't adequately addressed
- A lack of acknowledgment of the assets within Northern Devon

During discussion the following points were raised:

The development of the growth plan could benefit from being delayed to follow the launch of the Government's Industrial Strategy.

HB advised Homes England planned to respond to the consultation. She raised concern about the lack of focus on housing's role in economic growth, specifically the impact of insufficient affordable housing and a shortage of skilled workers on new home construction.

AD provided feedback in terms of the document and the rationale for the report. Concerns were echoed in terms of what was missing from the report, specifically apprenticeships. It was felt NDF needed to be effective at pushing the North coast as a positive place to live and work.

AD went on to advise that following feedback from the CCA a working group set up to review the report.

BB noted the similarities of the document to the Productivity Plan and reiterated the need to respond as NDF in terms of the representation of Northern Devon in the report. Work to review the growth strategy against the London Growth Strategy using AI was noted, BB advised this would be forwarded to DD and CF for the collated response.

Missing sectors such as Tourism, Agritech and Aquaculture were noted and AB advised there was no reflection of South West being the natural capital of England, especially in terms of the assets of Northern Devon.

SH suggested that both local MPs should be provided with the NDF response to the growth plan, requesting they also respond to the consultation.

During discussion on how to promote Northern Devon the Board reflected on role of the Cultural Partnership and the different needs for the area. The importance of developing a Northern Devon Place Story was recognised – noting that a Devon Place Story was emerging. SH updated on the progress so far and advised that NDF would be advised to take this forward, possibly using AI.

During discussion on the role of the CCA BB advised of the critical role they will have in terms of the skills focus and funding. The development of a skills plan was highlighted and the impact of future developments in the sector were also noted. The need for NDF to be involved in inputting on the future skills strategy was felt to be key.

Chair asked for a half hour catch up with SH, KM, DD, CF and BB following the meeting to reflect on the feedback and pull together the responses.

It was requested that the Board responses be emailed and a final draft would be sent at the end of the week Any further feedback from the Board – final draft for the end of the week.

8. Update from North Devon Hospital Plans

KA updated on the negotiations with Government and advised that there wasn't any update at the time.

9. AOB

Chair summarised the key discussion points and action items. During discussion it was arranged for KJ to contact MG at TTVS regarding Holsworthy Youth Club.

Meeting ended: 11:57