

Draft Minutes

Northern Devon Futures

Tuesday 23rd September 2025

9.30am-12.00pm

In Person Meeting at Caddsdwn Business Park, Bideford

Attendees

- Peter Morrish (Chair) – Condition Monitoring Technology Group
- Marie Gould – North Devon Voluntary Service NDVS and Chair of Community & Place NDF Action Group
- Steve Hearse – Chief Executive, Torrington District Council
- Sarah Jane Mackenzie-Shapland – North Devon Council
- Councillor Ken James – Leader, Torrington District Council
- Bill Blythe – Petroc
- Rachel Searle – Westward Housing
- 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
- Mike Matthews – Lineal
- Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin (virtual)
- Philip Butterworth (virtual)
- Melanie Sealy (virtual)
- Peter Lever (virtual)
- Helen Bone – Homes England (virtual)
- Ewan Seear – Devon & Cornwall Police (virtual)
- Andrea Beecham – One Northern Devon and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (virtual)

In Attendance

- Dominic Dunbrook – North Devon Council
- Alex Farmery – Petroc
- Jon Walter – Torrington District Council
- Shelby May – Torrington District Council
- Lauren Glover – Torrington District Council
- Steve Stanbury – Makers Map
- Sean Anstey – Combined County Authority

Meeting Started: 09.38am

1. Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed Members and explained that Steve Hearse and Katherine Allen were running late.

Apologies were received from the following Board members:

- Andy Bell
- Kerry Denton
- Kurt Hintz
- Stuart Brocklehurst
- Donna Manson
- Alan Dyke
- Ken Miles
- Chris Fuller
- Sir Geoffrey Cox MP for Torrington & Tavistock
- Philip Adams
- Joe Wharton
- Richard Light
- Donna Sibley
- Kelly Brend
- Steven Lodge – Rachel Searle present in absence

2. Declarations of Interests

Members were reminded to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests related to the agenda items that were discussed.

BB declared an interest on the Petroc Merger.

3. Minutes and Actions

Members were invited to comment on the minutes from the previous meeting. The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th June 2025 and the 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. 22-09-2025 - The One Northern Devon Health and Well-being work plan with juniors mental health action was deferred to Kurt Hintz

				and Alex Farmery for follow-up.
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. 22-09-2025 – Sean Anstey explained that the Devon, Plymouth, Torbay working plan is due for approval by the command authority by the end of September. Delivery will be in-house for Plymouth and Devon, and outsourced for Torbay.
3.	Presentation slides from the meeting on 10 th June to be shared with the Board	Secretariat/JW/Chair/KA		22-09-2025 - Presentation slides from the previous meeting were circulated
4.	Local Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from Away Day shared with Planning Teams • 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 	SJ /Chair		22-09-2025 - Presentations from the away day were circulated.
5.	AI - Dedicated session for NDF Board and consideration within Action Groups.	Chair / Secretariat		22-09-2025 – Chair explained that an AI-dedicated session was agreed for the next North Devon Futures workshop. 22-09-2025 - TJ explained that new money may be coming in as a result of Trump visit, so some leads to follow up on this. The Chair suggested that TJ assists in

				building the agenda for the next workshop.
6.	Agenda item for the next NDF Board – Implementation of KPIs	Chair / Secretariat		22-09-2025 – Board Members noted that this was an agenda item.
7.	Response to the Devon & Torbay Growth Plan. <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. 	Board members Chair / KM / SH / CF / DD		22-09-2025 – The Chair explained that a response has been provided for the Devon & Torbay Growth Plan.
8.	Explore adapting the Torridge Place story for wider Northern Devon place story.	KM / SH		22-09-2025 – Board Members noted that the Northern Devon Place Story was an agenda item
9.	KJ & MG to make contact about Holsworthy Youth Centre.	KJ / MG		22-09-2025 – KJ explained that contact has not been made, but KJ has had a meeting with Beki Sharples (TTVS).
10.	22-09-2025 - Secretariat to add an agenda item to a future meeting regarding floating offshore wind, procurement and vessel construction (Appledore Shipyard).	Secretariat		

KJ entered at 09.43am.

4. Approve new strategy (Partnership with One Northern Devon)

TJ raised the need for the latest economic intelligence to be discussed, with multiple urgent items requiring debate. The Chair explained that if there was time it could be discussed under item 13 'AOB'.

The Chair requested that Members be informed of those who had joined the meeting virtually.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin briefly explained that there is a new grant from Devon County Council for young people/ youth organisations.

The Chair referred to the new strategy document “Thriving in Northern Devon” and outlined that the aim was to review the progress of the partnership and to create stronger relations with One Northern Devon.

The Chair explained that this was the opportunity for feedback from Members.

The vision statement is: "Everyone in Northern Devon has the same opportunity to deliver healthy, sustainable, and fulfilling life".

Due to technology issues, Members briefly took a break and introduced themselves.

SH and KA entered the meeting at 09.53am.

Board Members were informed that the mission is to achieve more through collaboration, attract investment, unlock long-term prosperity, and celebrate the culture and nature of Northern Devon. The Chair emphasised the focus on working together, working towards a shared workplan between One Northern Devon and Northern Devon Futures.

Members noted that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include GVA per worked hour, earnings per place of work, qualifications, life expectancy, competitiveness, trade balance, house affordability, and fuel poverty.

The Chair explained certain things need amending and are waiting for specific information to be provided, but invited Members to provide feedback.

MR outlined that the KPIS are slightly different on the agenda for the Housing and Infrastructure document and so some work is required.

SH commended the document, specifically KPIs, and recognised PM’s and KA’s continued hard work. PM thanked AB for her contributions too.

Members were all in favour of the document.

5. Approve websites updates

PM thanked AF for her work on the website updates, as all 6 action groups are now on the website. Members noted that some work is required around the cultural board.

Approve new terms of reference

AF circulated the updated terms of reference. The Chair informed Members that if they were happy that the updated terms of reference would be put on the website, and AF agreed.

6. Update on Northern Devon Makers Map

The Chair welcomed Steve Stanbury, and outlined the need for young people to be aware of opportunities and the potential careers in Northern Devon.

SS presented the North Devon Makers map, an interactive platform showcasing local companies and connecting them with potential employees. SS highlighted the challenges faced in Northern Devon.

The platform aims to gain exposure, retain young people, and provide better opportunities. SS explained that Northern Devon should be advertised as an appealing place to move to.

The website features company profiles, a careers and opportunities feed, and a job matching system based on skills. This will make it easier for individuals to be matched with employers through job notifications when opportunities are listed.

SS explained that the Makers Map is currently a Minimal Viable Product (MVP) and so with feedback and suggestions there is an aim to enhance the website and add additional features.

SS provided Members with a demonstration of the website. Members noted that users can easily create personal and business accounts.

PM thanked SS for his work and informed Members that SS had completed the work on a voluntary basis.

Briefly, PM outlined the potential for teachers to promote the website in schools.

PM suggested that a goal would be to get businesses loaded onto the platform by the end of October, in order for them to be presented on a screen at the North Devon Innovates Museum exhibit.

MM emphasised the importance of educating parents, students, schools, and employers about work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. MM commended SS for his work.

BB explained that Petroc College is seeking 2000 work experience placements for students.

TJ suggested considering whether to call it 'North Devon Makers' or 'Northern Devon Makes', understanding integrated supply chains, and ensuring the platform's sustainability.

TJ confirmed his support for the Makes Map.

Members discussed the name of the 'North Devon Makers Map'. TJ justified the positives of naming it 'Northern Devon Makers Map'. DD suggested that the name 'North Devon Makers Map' may resonate with the business community more effectively. DD suggested integrating the map into the new North Devon Plus website.

KJ highlighted the need to promote the area and attract businesses.

SS explained the ease of changing the name and adding additional features to the map.

MG emphasised the importance of engaging young people and teachers.

MR suggested monitoring the impact of the platform and considering its potential for other industries.

TJ emphasised the benefits of naming the platform 'Northern Devon Makers', which was strongly supported by PM.

The board agreed to consider the name carefully and to promote the platform to businesses.

7. Review Action Group Plans/Cultural Board Progress

Cultural Partnership Board

DD confirmed that the Cultural Partnership Board has completed a review of its role within Northern Devon Futures. She stated that the Board is now moving towards recruitment, guided by the updated Terms of Reference.

DD added that the Cultural Partnership Board has requested that Northern Devon Futures provide guidance on the type of information they would like to be included in the quarterly updates.

PM asked that the new Terms of Reference are uploaded to the Northern Devon Futures website.

Economy, Innovation and Skills

MM, as Vice-Chair explained that the group's primary focus has been the Maker's Map. He then detailed the importance of destination tourism in relation to business.

PM explained that DD has created a template for Action Groups to use when reporting progress or asking for assistance.

TJ explained that he has been looking at graduate opportunities in the area and the respective salaries. He added that this analysis has shown that each opportunity currently has 50 to 100 applicants and the average salary is not significantly higher than minimum wage. TJ stated that the drop in graduate opportunities is a challenge needing to be addressed. KA asked if the initiatives *Get Devon Working* and *Connect to Work* are relevant to the Action Group. MM explained that they are aware of these initiatives, although they are ever shifting. AB shared her recent discussions with KM, who confirmed that the most suitable communication channel for the *Connect to Work* initiative is through the Economy, Innovation, and Skills Action Group. MM acknowledged this but noted the overlap in topics across the Action Groups.

PM asked the BB to add the above as an action for the Chairs and Secretary meeting as an example of crossed working objective.

Housing and Infrastructure Group

MR stated that the group have circulated the Terms of Reference and feedback is welcomed. He stated that a key task is to determine how the group aligns with the overall strategy and noted that this information is outlined on the website.

MR furthered that the one outstanding issue is establishing a clear link to crime in relation to the strategy to ensure that crime matters are addressed. However, this is currently under development. KA mentioned that she had spoken with Emma Butler-Jones (Superintendent Devon and Cornwall Police), who confirmed that she is happy to assist. MR agreed to follow up with EBJ, and PM asked to arrange a date with KA for further discussion.

The Board had a brief discussion about affordability, availability funding within the housing sector.

MM emphasised the importance of identifying a method to monitor the impact of the groups work.

Health and Equity

Andrea explained the four objectives of the group

- Shift care closer to individuals and communities
- Improve support for those most at risk
- Find ways to prioritise prevention
- Focusing on what matters most to the neighbourhood and community.

She then detailed their projects

- One Ilfracombe – *Closing the Gap*
 - o A multiagency subgroup which targets individuals that are most at risk of poor health outcomes.
- *Health & Justice 6 month Pilot*
 - o The go-live date is set for October 1st; however, issues such as data protection are still being worked through. Led by NHS England and the Ministry of Justice, the initiative aims to improve access to services and enhance information sharing between organisations, to better support people on probation and reduce reoffending.
- *Poverty Truth Commission*
 - o Although the project ends in December, there are 15 products in development because of that work.
- *Bideford Health Hub*
 - o Aimed at increasing access to health and wellbeing for residents.

PM stated that a dedicated agenda item can be scheduled for early 2026 to focus on the outcomes of the Poverty Truth Commission and explore how the lessons can be applied to a wider area.

Community Wellbeing and Inclusion Group

MG outlined the origins of the group, explaining that it was formed by merging the Communities and Place Group with the Community Development Strategic Steering Group across One Northern Devon. She stated the groups aim is to use the Raising Community Spirit Model to build a happy and healthy community. To achieve this, they plan to engage with the community to identify area where national approaches are falling short. MG added that a draft overview of the strategy has been prepared and will be reviewed on the 21st October, with the goal of co-designing an action plan.

Biosphere

There were no new updates, but TJ provided information on recent and upcoming events related to the biosphere.

8. Update on Devon and Torbay CCA (Combined County Authority)

SA introduced the CCA and provided an overview of its role, responsibilities, and priorities.

He then detailed the five areas of focus

- Adult Skills and Lifelong Learning
- Employment and good jobs
- Transport and connectivity
- Strategic housing
- Economic development and innovation

Using these priorities, SA explained that the CCA are developing a policy and performance framework which includes a corporate plan, growth plan, local transport plan, and a skills and future workforce plan.

SA provided an overview of how the CCA is governed, detailing the relevant advisory groups and committees and their position within the wider authority structure.

He added that some responsibilities of the programme are:

- Adult Skills Funding
- Connect to Work Programme and Employment Initiatives
- Local Transport Authority (from April 2026)

- Strategic Housing Pipeline and Regional Spatial Planning (subject to legislation)
- Regional Infrastructure Funds
- Oversight of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)
- Economic Development and Inward Investment

BB queried the impact of the shift in government from Department for Education (DfE) to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on adult skills funding and devolution. SA stated that, at present, he does not anticipate any significant impact. However, there may be a slight shift in focus from qualifications to how they support individuals into employment.

AB asked how GPs are being involved in the process. SA explained that from a Connect to Work perspective, there has been some local engagement. However he recognised that whilst consultation has begun, further development is needed.

KA asked what Northern Devon Futures can do to assist the CCA. SA explained that the structure is still taking shape, but noted that the original CCA model was designed for metropolitan areas may not be suitable for rural regions. He emphasised that the model will need to adapt the approach to meet the specific needs of the area, which can be communicated through Northern Devon Futures.

KJ highlighted the need for Torrington and the rural surrounding areas to be represented within the CCA.

SJ stated that Local Authorities are working close with the CCA, especially through the development of a new Local Plan.

9.Update on Local Government Reorganisation

Not addressed.

10.Northern Devon Place Story

SH confirmed that the workshop has taken place. An initial draft of the Place Story has been reviewed, and a second draft has since been circulated which is currently under review. He noted ongoing challenges in defining the purpose and scope of the document.

Dominie and SJ emphasised that the Place Story should reflect the unique character of Northern Devon, its people, economy, and geography. The group suggested that the document should focus on promoting the area's strengths.

KJ raised concerns about aligning the document with Local Government Reorganisation, given the uncertainty around what it will look like.

11.Petroc College Merger

BB provided an update on the proposed merger between Exeter College and Petroc, noting that the merged entity would be named Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group, with the Barnstaple campus becoming North Devon College. He explained that the aim of the merger is to safeguard the future of further education in the area and strengthen the college's national and regional positioning. He advised the group that the consultation is still open for comments.

TJ noted BB's work on the Barnstaple Campus's net-zero initiative.

CA highlighted the lack of transport between Barnstaple and Tiverton. BB expressed his own concerns regarding transport, specifically the cost. However, he stated that he hopes the merger would help mitigate this issue.

The group commended Petroc for their impressive performance in this year's results.

12.Update on the Local Plan

Not addressed.

13.AOB

TJ informed the group that a judicial review is imminent regarding cabling routes for Floating Offshore Wind. He expressed concern about recent changes to government procurement rules, particularly their impact on Appledore Shipyard. He explained that a contract for vessel construction was recently awarded to Cádiz, despite the ships being able to be made locally. TJ requested that this issue be added to a future agenda for discussion.

SH updated the group that Navantia has confirmed shipbuilding will take place in Cádiz due to infrastructure delays. However, there is an expectation that some components, such as the bow, will still be manufactured at Appledore Shipyard.

Meeting Ended: 12.06pm