ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The quality and character Torquay's rural, urban and maritime landscapes have long been recognised as a valuable asset. Countryside and beaches are the top attractions for visitors to the south as well as giving a significant motivation for new residents to move to the area. However this means that the landscape is under continuous pressure for change from development, changes in land management practices, and the effects of climate change. Torquay's rural landscape is heavily influenced by their patchwork of agricultural activity and the continuation of agri-food industries is vital for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape.

Policy E1

The designated Countryside and coastal fringes will be protected from green field development unless the site is identified as a development site within this Plan

Landscapes perceived as beautiful, tranquil and 'natural' improve mental wellbeing by reducing stress and evoking positive emotions, and help improve physical fitness by providing inviting and inspiring environments to exercise. Access to the countryside, such as via the public rights of way network, is important for these benefits to be fully realised.

Growth in visitor numbers and the resident population will exert further pressure on Torquay's landscape; this needs to be managed carefully to maintain the high quality and distinctive character of the landscape to secure future economic prosperity and health and wellbeing.

It is recognised that Torquay has a large number of brown field and redundant tourism sites providing a significant pool of assets for redevelopment and hence reducing the pressure on developing green spaces.

Policy E2

All green spaces identified as community green spaces within the Community Partnership submissions of the Neighbourhood Plan will be protected from any additional development without the express approval of that community.

People want to live, work and visit attractive places and the Bay's identity is its natural setting and stunning coastal environment. It is important with the increasing pressures that are being placed on Torbay's green infrastructure, that these qualities are not compromised. The value of green infrastructure, for the health of Torbay, needs to be acknowledged and measures put in place for long term investment. The economic regeneration of the Bay needs to consider green infrastructure alongside

the built environment; only then can sustainable communities be created for the future.

Policy E3

Any new development must be in compliance with the Green Infrastructure Plan

The diversity of landscapes in Torquay is striking, whether it is the rugged coastlines of rocky cliffs and sweeping bays, secluded valleys such as Cockington and Maidencombe, rolling hills of traditionally managed farmland, or its rich historic character. Torquay contain a number of valuable landscapes which have been designated in recognition of their international, national and local significance, in particular the approval of the whole area as a Global Geopark, one of only 57 in the world. The Geopark provides a tool for promoting the area's geology and natural resources through education, and supporting the sustainable economic development of the area, especially through tourism.

Just as it is necessary to strategically plan and deliver roads, utilities and drainage, it is also important to plan strategically in order to deliver a healthy natural environment. Both require the same level of attention. A green infrastructure network is made up of interconnected open spaces that provide multiple environmental, economic and social benefits, linked together throughout the urban landscape and out to the wider countryside, coast and sea. These spaces provide a mix of functions including recreation, sustainable transport, education, wildlife habitat, flood risk management, local food production, energy production and ecosystem services. Often these functions are overlapping, so that for example woodland can be a recreational asset, a wildlife habitat, a landscape feature and a fuel supply all at once.

Our parks and green spaces are rightly valued as amongst our most precious assets. There are many challenges facing us, but the following are essential:

1. Improving appearance of green space.

2. Improving accessibility, especially for the disabled.

3. Challenging people's perceptions of green spaces so they are seen as areas to visit and use more often.

4. Improving facilities.

5. Encouraging children to play and be active

6. Increasing numbers of events/entertainments where this does not adversely affect the quality of life of the surrounding community.

7. Developing opportunities for using green spaces for learning.

8. Promoting and protecting the heritage assets of Torquay's green spaces.

9. Promoting green spaces as drivers for economic activity while protecting them.

10. Developing opportunities for using green spaces for appropriate sporting activities thus contribute to peoples' health and wellbeing.

11. Recognising, protecting and enhancing the biodiversity value of green space.

By rising to meet these challenges, we will enhance biodiversity and landscape character, improve economic prosperity and support regeneration of the Bay, benefit people and create healthy communities, adapt to climate change support a low carbon economy and safeguard our ecosystems.

A co-ordinated approach needs to be taken by all agencies to promote Green tourism, and to increase and enhance the maritime offer for both residents and visitors. The number of sea based activities has declined in recent years, so there are many opportunities for businesses to be set up, making sure that there are no threats to the actual environment. Tor Bay is now designated a Marine Conservation Zone, and not enough is currently being done to inform the public about this, either through education in our schools, or through tourist information.

Policy E4

Any new tourism based developments will be solely on brown field sites unless they form part of an approved development site within the Neighbourhood Plan

Maintaining the health of the environment provides a wealth of benefits which strengthen the economy and aid regeneration by offering more jobs, reduced need for healthcare, pride of place, improved tourism, better adaptation for climate change and increased property values. Outdoor education is an important part of a child's development and green infrastructure provides access to open air classrooms and opportunities to explore nature first hand.

Our climate is changing and it is now established that we need to adapt in response. Green infrastructure offers mechanisms to limit the effects of climate change by, for example, reducing the threat of flooding through incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems in new developments and restoring wetlands and ponds, which will store run-off. The cycle network under creation across Torbay will reduce the need to use cars and provides sustainable transport links. A good network of urban trees and woodlands reduces the urban heat island effect and also provides shelter and

insulation from cold temperatures, reducing the need for air conditioning in summer time and heating in winter, as well as cleaning the air that we breathe.

Policy E5

All new developments will provide sustainable drainage systems including the development and retention of existing ponds and wetlands for run-off management.

Policy E6

All new developments will have cycle and pedestrian links to existing networks

Policy E7

There will be a presumption against any development on established woodland unless that development can demonstrate an enhancement to the long term sustainability of that woodland and any public access is maintained.

Policy E8

To increase the planting of new trees in urban areas any new tree planted within the curtilage of a domestic property will have a presumption in favour of pruning and felling at any time.

Policy E9

Any tree within the curtilage of a domestic property will have a presumption in favour of pruning or felling if that tree can be demonstrated as having a negative impact on their quality of life or the enjoyment of the garden and is replanted with another tree.

Policy E10

To link areas of woodland to form green corridors, all new developments must provide suitable and appropriate green corridors within that development so that adjacent woodland or hedgerows are linked for the benefit of the natural movement of wildlife.

Policy E11

There will be a presumption against development or the construction of roads on sites of less than 10 Hectares forming the shortest green link between Country Parks or areas of countryside.