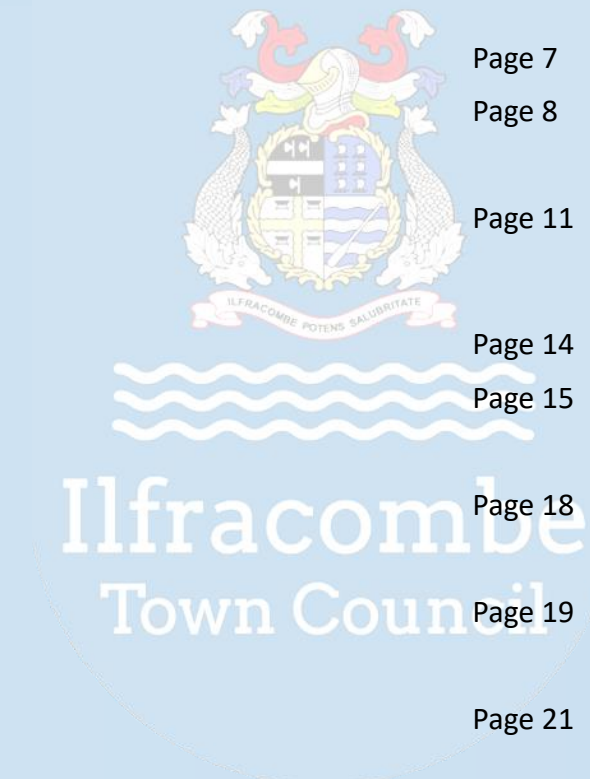


# **ILFRACOMBE STRATEGIC PLAN**



**2024 - 2034**

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# MISSION STATEMENT

*'To be a welcoming, forward-looking and characterful seaside town where tourists can enjoy great holidays, companies can thrive, and residents can feel supported.'*

Ilfracombe Town Council is working hard to deliver on all these aims. Our town already has wonderful assets in terms of its heritage, architecture and beautiful natural setting. Even more importantly, we have a very strong community spirit and share a real willingness to make things happen.

In recent years, ITC has actively supported the building of the multi-million-pound water sports hub at Larkstone and is working with North Devon Council to try and bring new investment to the high street, seafront and harbour areas, while also giving its backing to a major new housing development on the town's Southern edge. Acquiring the Lantern Centre for use by local businesses and the community has added a major asset to the town, along with the acquisition of Ropery Road Car Park which has added much needed parking. ITC's management of Cheyne Beach car park, under licence from the Environment Agency, has equally benefitted local residents.

At the same time, the creation of a maritime hub that would see regular ferry services between the town and South Wales remains another objective of ITC, which supports the efforts of local authorities on both sides of the Bristol Channel to make this happen.

Like other towns in the South West, Ilfracombe also faces significant challenges in terms of housing availability, with a particular shortage of social housing for rent, along with individual pockets of deprivation. Both of these challenges will require long-term solutions and delivery by higher levels of local and national government, with ITC's support. Ilfracombe is full of opportunities for new and existing businesses, from manufacturing and IT to tourism and the creative industries. At the same time, it offers local people and visitors a coastal, countryside lifestyle that few other areas can match. Taken together, ITC believes this can be a winning combination and is determined to achieve the success that Ilfracombe deserves.

# INTRODUCTION

## *Why have a Strategic Plan?*

Our Mission Statement sets out ITC's ambition for Ilfracombe and the people who live here. Reviewed in 2023, the 2015-2025 Strategic Plan is designed to help ITC achieve that ambition. Acting as a roadmap for the years to come, it provides a set of objectives, action plans and background information, so that Councillors and the wider community can clearly see the way ahead.

By developing and sharing its Strategic Plan, ITC is also asserting its democratic right to represent and support the people in the town, particularly where bodies such as District and County Councils are involved. Too often in the past, 'top-down' regeneration projects have either failed to materialise or been delivered in isolation, rather than as part of a coherent, long-term plan that reflects the town's true priorities. Dialogue and cooperation with other levels of local government are the key to delivering the projects that Ilfracombe needs - and the Strategic Plan is helping to strengthen those relationships.

## *Keeping the Strategic Plan up to date*

The original ITC Strategic Plan was adopted in January 2010, covering the 10-year period to 2020 and incorporating 17 objectives. It has proved enormously successful in terms of supporting ITC's vision and delivering on many of its objectives, although some have been modified due to Government policy changes or economic considerations.

The document was first reviewed in March 2015, becoming the 2015-2025 Strategic Plan with an 18th objective devoted to health matters. The below-average life expectancy in parts of Ilfracombe, together with major reorganisation of healthcare, led to a closer look at ways of providing a support network for the town. A further review was launched by ITC in the summer of 2023, leading to its adoption in July 2024.

## *Implementation by ITC and beyond*

The Councillors, Officers and Staff of ITC are not only committed to taking ownership of the Strategic Plan, but also to encouraging partner organisations to sign up to its objectives. Grant-aided bodies will be required, upon receiving a grant, to sign up to the Strategic Plan and any direct initiatives that might be developed. In line with the principle of collective responsibility, Councillors are expected to promote its objectives in their dealings with outside organisations when representing ITC. The power of the Strategic Plan can only be maintained by enthusiasm and dynamism. It is not something that can be imposed, and it will not be successful without appropriate leadership.

# STRATEGIC PLAN STRUCTURE

As the Mission Statement makes clear, ITC's aims are to encourage prosperity, support residents and create a positive environment. To address each of these points, the Strategic Plan and its 18 associated objectives are grouped into four sections:

1. ITC and Funding
2. Business and Economy
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Place and Environment

Every section contains a set of objectives, each of which is accompanied by both a series of bullet-point actions for delivering that objective -- and a commentary providing context, background and practical examples of how those actions could be carried out.

It is important that any strategic plan remains relevant and flexible. To achieve this, it must be subject to regular review in the light of changing circumstances. Ilfracombe Town Council has already demonstrated its readiness to revise its Strategic Plan where necessary and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

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Image: Scott Bingster

**SECTION 1:**  
**ILFRACOMBE TOWN**  
**COUNCIL & FUNDING**

## Objective 1

### Assume management of our town

- *Identify, use and enhance powers of discretion*
- *Agree the Ilfracombe Town Council (ITC) Strategy and Action Plans*
- *Continue to develop, support and lead One Ilfracombe & its principles and treat as core business*
- *Use staff and Council resources to support core business*
- *Aim to have ITC's strategic objectives embedded in partner agency strategies*
- *Continue to engage and expand conversations with other public bodies, including national organisations*
- *Engage with important private bodies*
- *Capture and share learning, knowledge and experiences*
- *Take advantage of the Localism Act<sup>1</sup> and associated legislation*
- *Develop a strong and meaningful community network, allowing two-way conversations about town issues*
- *ITC to imaginatively modernise itself developing public events that help increase public trust, confidence and ITC's relevance*
- *Encourage democracy*
- *Use modern technology in valuable ways*
- *Require ITC- funded organisations to accept and promote ITC's strategic objectives*
- *Evaluate projects using Social Return on Investment (SROI) or similar model*
- *Build on our national leadership role in localism by developing strategic relationships*
- *Carry out action and improvement plans*

1.1 There has been a step change in recent times for central, and to a lesser extent local government, towards supporting communities who are ambitious and wish to assume direct responsibility for local services. There is also recognition that the trend toward achieving economies of scale in the public sector via large service delivery packages, thereby removing local accountability, has at times resulted in poorer services.

The 2011 Localism Act gives smaller local authorities far more scope to assume responsibility for the destiny of a local community and ITC is determined to take advantage of the related legislation, where appropriate, to benefit the residents of Ilfracombe. ITC is committed to utilising new powers and becoming more directly responsible and influential in the delivery of services, working closely with other organisations.

<sup>1</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a79a0b740f0b642860d98a2/1896534.pdf>



- 1.2 Since 2010, ITC has created One Ilfracombe, a company limited by guarantee and with Board members representing all the public bodies that deliver services in Ilfracombe. Following publication of the original Strategic Plan, it was evident that to deliver the Plan's objectives, the agencies providing public services in our town needed to work towards a common goal. It was discovered that many public service providers rarely talked to each other, and a certain amount of duplication was occurring that wasted resources and caused confusion for the general public. By bringing all the agencies together One Ilfracombe has been able to create a more coordinated approach to the delivery of services at a time when fairly severe budget cuts have been experienced by all public bodies.
- 1.3 In creating One Ilfracombe, ITC has provided the vehicle to further the delivery of the Strategic Plan. ITC will use its staff to work seamlessly with the One Ilfracombe Board across all aspects in delivering a better service to the residents of Ilfracombe.
- 1.4 ITC will endeavour to encourage other councils and agencies to reference this document in their work that affects our town. This is particularly relevant to any 'Local Plan' produced by the district or county councils.
- 1.5 ITC will continue to expand its conversations with other public bodies throughout the country to ensure that it acquires details of practices that may benefit the people of Ilfracombe. These contacts have been generated through the localism agenda and the setting up of One Ilfracombe.
- 1.6 ITC, together with One Ilfracombe, will continue to expand its relationship with private organisations, particularly those operating in Ilfracombe, to ensure that ITC can alleviate any concerns and be shown to be proactive in creating additional employment opportunities. We will encourage the private sector to play its part in respecting and supporting the town's aims and objectives.
- 1.7 The sharing of knowledge between ITC and partners in both the public and private sectors is essential to creating a good working relationship. The One Ilfracombe Board has representatives from both the public, private sector, as well as independent board directors and the input from both is having a positive effect on the agendas of all the One Ilfracombe themes.
- 1.8 ITC is endeavouring to communicate better with the community and ensure that, where reasonable, the views and opinions of the community are acknowledged and acted upon.
- 1.9 ITC intends to continue its policy of openness and will try to encourage more people to become involved in its activities so that its purpose is appreciated.
- 1.10 ITC will continue to promote the democratic process and encourage more residents to put themselves forward as prospective candidates for an elected position on ITC.
- 1.11 ITC will continue to embrace modern technology where it is of benefit to the progress of ITC and where community engagement can be enhanced. Where relevant we will seek to invest in technology.

- 1.12 Where ITC contributes to the funds or resources of organisations within the town, it will expect those organisations to accept and promote its strategic objectives.
- 1.13 Projects initiated by ITC will be monitored and evaluated to ensure a clear indication of their social return on investment.
- 1.14 The pioneering work undertaken by One Ilfracombe is recognised nationally as demonstrating leadership in the promotion of local governance. Strategic relationships developed during this process will be strengthened and enhanced to influence Government policy on local issues affecting the development and wellbeing of communities. Organisations that have followed ITC's example include the likes of One Northern Devon, One Barnstaple and One Eastern Devon.
- 1.15 The value of any strategy is in the positive actions that follow. ITC is determined to ensure that plans are created and then implemented. The current strategy will form the backdrop for all major policies that ITC develops, with a robust Action Plan to deliver this strategy being created and reviewed on an annual basis.



Images: North Devon Council

## Objective 2

### Be prepared to either fund or source funds ourselves in view of limited public finances

- *Optimise use of the precept*
- *Borrow against business cases*
- *Develop projects with private funders*
- *Seek to generate surpluses when operating commercial services*
- *Consider development of a Business Improvement District (BID)*
- *Encourage benefactors – legacies – sponsors*
- *Continue grant sourcing*
- *Work with other grant-giving bodies operating in the town*
- *Take advantage of legislative opportunities*
- *Consider opportunities to develop housing for local people*
- *Develop sustainable community projects and businesses where adding value*
- *Learn from other successful organisations and communities*
- *Through One Ilfracombe coordinate local organisations investing in common objectives / programmes*
- *Through One Ilfracombe continue to develop strategic partnerships*

2.1 ITC's financial year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. A budget is set annually and published in January of each year.

It is our intent to publish a 3-year finance plan to indicate to our community the desired expenditure and expected income for this period and in doing so to give guidance to a newly elected Council. This plan should be published within two years following an election.

2.2 The precept is the amount of money that ITC raises from Council Tax payers in our area every year to help support the financial budget. The proportion of Council Tax allocated to ITC is small (approximately 3% during 2024/25), with most of the tax going to Devon County Council and a lower percentage to North Devon Council.

Over the past ten years ITC has raised its precept to a level that is now comparable with most other parishes in the area. In doing so, it has been able to open a regeneration budget which is designed to provide seed funding for capital projects within the town. In addition, ITC now operates the Ropery Road Car Park which, after interest repayments, generates a surplus that is being reinvested in the town. ITC has also acquired The Lantern building in the High Street.

Where precept funds are distributed to other organisations, such as through the grant application system, ITC will require, as a condition and as appropriate, recipients to support objectives set by ITC that are aligned with the Strategic Plan.

- 2.3 ITC will work with private funding / equity partners to achieve objectives, especially where a proposal can demonstrate the benefit to the community.
- 2.4 ITC is not disbarred from operating commercial enterprises, but that is not its core purpose. However, should an opportunity arise where it would be beneficial to be involved, ITC would be willing to do so, subject to safeguards, conditions and the measuring of risks and rewards.
- 2.5 A Business Improvement District (BID) is a partnership between a Local Authority and the local business community to develop projects and services that will benefit the trading environment within the boundary of a clearly defined commercial area.
- BIDs allow businesses in a defined area and business sector(s) to vote on which additional services they want to invest in, to improve their trading environment. If approved, a levy is made against all businesses in the district and the fund used to achieve specific agreed objectives. A BID would last for 5 years.
- ITC will consider consulting on establishing a BID at an appropriate time and facilitate its implementation, if supported by the commercial community.
- 2.6 Like councils in other towns and cities, ITC appreciates the generosity of legacies from benefactors who wish to give something back to the community where they lived, worked or were born. ITC encourages and recognises the financial support of Ilfracombe's benefactors and is ready to facilitate the granting of future legacies to the town.
- 2.7 Sponsorship is a popular source of fundraising especially from the commercial community. ITC has enjoyed some success in this area, but would like to develop it further, either through support for specific initiatives and events, or individual and cyclical projects. Sponsorship can come in many guises, not just financial; it could also include resource commitment on an annual basis.
- Some private companies are enthusiastic about such proposals as it assists in team building and giving back to the community at relatively modest financial cost.
- 2.8 Ilfracombe has for many years relied to a significant extent on external funding, usually directed at specific projects to 'make things happen'. In the past, the search for funding has been led by other organisations, such as North Devon Council and/or other agencies. More recently, ITC has been working in unison with these third parties, particularly with NDC, in order to make grant sourcing more focused. ITC will continue to give time to its current staff to work within a team that is seeking grant funding. These staff will endeavour to gain information at an early stage with relation to grant opportunities.
- 2.9 ITC will work with other grant-giving bodies within the town, such as the Rotary Clubs, Round Table and the Lions Club to ensure that money available is distributed fairly.
- 2.10 ITC will endeavour to keep abreast of changes in legislation to ensure that changes may be used to the benefit of the town.



Image: Mike Jenner

- 2.11 As more responsibility filters down to town/parish councils, ITC may wish to consider taking ownership of assets that have been created through Section 106 agreements with developers.
- 2.12 Where community projects and businesses can be seen to be adding value to the town, ITC must be seen to be aiding the development of these schemes within its scope of influence.
- 2.13 It is important that ITC learns from the experiences of others, particularly other towns and parishes, to ensure that it makes the right decisions in taking the town forward.
- 2.14 Through One Ilfracombe, ITC has the opportunity to make sure that programmes designed to benefit the residents of Ilfracombe are coordinated and supported by all the agencies that operate in the town. By working with One Ilfracombe, ITC must continue to develop strategic partnerships with both private and public organisations.

# **SECTION 2:**

# **BUSINESS & ECONOMY**

## Objective 3

### One of our main businesses is tourism, broaden its appeal to all potential markets

- *Create and periodically update a marketing plan*
- *Bring large tourism operators and tourist related organisations with us*
- *Promote consistent message and branding of the town*
- *Improve the public realm*
- *Target as quality tourist destination to specific groups*
- *Promote quality tourist events*
- *Market our history*
- *Promote the character of the historic and built environment*
- *Promote the harbour as a destination*
- *Promote water borne activities and training leveraging the facilities offered by the Watersports Hub and the Harbourmasters training initiatives*

- 3.1 Tourism continues to be Ilfracombe's main business - a business that is the lifeblood of the town and its impact all-pervasive; one in three jobs and 40% of the town's businesses are in tourism related industries<sup>2</sup>. It holds the key to Ilfracombe's success or decline therefore the industry needs to be protected from present and future risks with forward planning to ensure Ilfracombe ably competes for a full share of the modern tourism market.
- 3.2 Many of the town's tourism businesses have developed successful marketing strategies and utilise good marketing techniques. As a town council, we encourage tourism businesses and associations to work together as a group and to develop a long-term marketing strategy for the town. Supported by ITC, the IBTA is best placed to initiate such a group and to drive positive change.
- 3.3 Successful IBTA initiatives, such as the [www.visitilfracombe.co.uk](http://www.visitilfracombe.co.uk) website, should be sustained and further developed.
- 3.4 Recognising the need for a consistent, quality brand image for Ilfracombe the brand developed in 2009 has been accepted throughout the town and the logo, strap line, colours and images are being used by most businesses. Curious Coastal Charm is a successful brand but needs new impetus. A start has been made to enhance the public realm by introducing the 'brand colours' and this will continue to be supported by ITC. This brand must be protected, kept alive and promoted and ITC will need to be at the forefront in championing this by promoting the correct colours in the public realm and on advertising materials.

<sup>2</sup> Ilfracombe Harbour Board Development Strategy 2012-2026

3.5 With smartphones now the primary source of information for the general public, ITC will support the development of a town app for Ilfracombe. The aim will be to provide a wide range of tourism information (events, venues, etc.) and a directory of local services, along with advertising/sponsorships by local businesses.

3.6 Art and weddings have transformed shoulder months. These niche markets need support and must be encouraged to engage with other tourism providers. Wetherspoons has created an all-weather attraction and ITC will encourage landlords to pursue similarly visionary developments.

If we can attract more visitors to the town, a larger all-weather attraction may become viable. To help deliver it, ITC will support the creation of a Marketing Forum and will coordinate with North Devon Council. By engaging with the private sector, several existing attractions could be combined into a single venue - and attract new investment from the entertainment industry.

3.7 A solid platform of credibility is required for PR activity to be successful and there are some hurdles that Ilfracombe must overcome before it can reach its potential. There is a general feeling that Ilfracombe has become "shabby" due to an increase in empty High Street shop fronts, some key development sites lying either derelict or dormant and a lack of investment in maintaining privately owned buildings (many of which are Victorian town houses that have been converted into HMOs). Targeting each of these issues in conjunction with and as part of the Marketing Strategy is required.

3.8 Often public realm improvements are carried out in isolation with a particular local authority department working unilaterally to achieve a particular aim. This problem is now being addressed through the Town Team. ITC will continue to support this group which comprises officers from Devon County Council, North Devon Council and Ilfracombe Town Council to ensure that all public realm works are coordinated and agreed.

3.9 Greater investment is needed in much of Ilfracombe's holiday accommodation and providers should be aware that the town's boutique hotels and top quality guesthouses are well booked throughout the season, despite commanding higher prices. Any council-funded marketing should target higher-spending audiences and their tourism needs in terms of accommodation, shopping, attractions and entertainment in Ilfracombe.

3.10 Niche tourism markets must be actively promoted. These will diversify the product offer and minimise the effects of seasonality. It is clear that not all niche markets involve the higher end of the market, but the high-spend bracket should be targeted through the creation of a marina and the addition of a motorhome park within walking distance of the town centre.

Ilfracombe also has a rich, colourful and diverse history and this should be marketed to the heritage tourism market (nationally and internationally) as a niche product in its own right. To promote this venture, it is essential that the character of the historic built environment is protected and preserved.



3.11 Quality tourist events should be established and promoted. Ilfracombe now has a strong arts reputation, courtesy of its links to Damien Hirst and the growth in recent years of galleries displaying the works of local artists. The very successful 'Art Trail' is now well-established and should be further promoted.

Coastal and maritime events such as the Lundy Yacht Race and the Sea Ilfracombe Festival should be promoted, together with the 'All Things Morris' weekend. The 'Walkers Welcome' campaign should be re-introduced and Ilfracombe's position as a starting point or destination for the National Cycle Network should be publicised, along with its place as the start of the Tarka Trail. With its beautiful coastline and coves, the Ilfracombe area is also benefiting from the growing popularity of year-round cold-water swimming.

Classic car and bike shows are always well-attended, but several of the town's longstanding events, such as Birdman and Victorian Week, have ceased since the Covid pandemic due to either a lack of public support or increasing regulatory requirements. The Carnival and Combe Christmas have also been at risk for the same reasons.

ITC will support any efforts to revive these discontinued events, while also welcoming new attractions such as the Ilfracombe Beer Festival launched in 2023.

All these events rely heavily on volunteers. For its part, ITC will try to encourage more engagement from residents and will use its influence to overcome some of the regulatory constraints, where this is possible.

3.12 The harbour board have set up a sea school with RYA training. It is visualised to run university courses possibly bringing in students from all over the world. This could bring in huge opportunities for Ilfracombe. The Town Council supports these training initiatives.



Image: Tim Lammerton

## Objective 4

### Support our large manufacturing employers

- *Maintain contact with local major employers*
- *Identify their needs*
- *Through One Ilfracombe promote links between schools, the Academy, colleges and Universities with manufacturers to support a sustainable workforce*
- *Understand and promote manufacturers when recognised as important industry leaders*
- *Support the work of local business associations in leading the town business sector*
- *Make Ilfracombe an attractive place to work*
- *Develop links with inward business investors*
- *Recognise and support out of area businesses that generate business opportunities in the town e.g. hotel operators*

- 4.1 Major employers represent an important part of our community and they contribute significantly to events in the town. ITC will continue to work with employers supporting initiatives that improve employment in the town. ITC will continue to assure employers of our support and that we are not an obstructive public body. Through One Ilfracombe it is gradually extending this relationship to other employers in order to ensure that ITC is regarded as a proactive body in furthering employment opportunities and acting to assist employers in any expansion proposals that they may have.
- 4.2 ITC must assist local employers if they are encountering problems that may be alleviated through local government resources.
- 4.3 ITC must continue the positive liaison between the Ilfracombe Academy and local employers to try to ensure that a percentage of students leaving school are suitable for employment with local companies and thereby creating career opportunities and preventing young people from leaving the town.

We must help local companies and the public sector in promoting the opportunities that are available for professional families and encourage them to relocate to Ilfracombe.

## Objective 5

### Promote the establishment of micro businesses

- *Find out their experience/views*
- *Set out promotional plan*
- *Take part in exhibitions*
- *Work with broadband and mobile phone providers to ensure good quality service*
- *Promote the Ilfracombe Centre work hub*

5.1 Faster and continually improving communications especially telecommunications has made the planet and the world of commerce a smaller place. No longer do businesses have to be located close to markets or large populated areas. Meanwhile, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on working practices has led to a surge in home working.

Micro businesses in particular tend to be more flexible than traditional enterprises often choosing to relocate to a particular area for lifestyle and family reasons.

5.2 Ilfracombe has many attributes to attract and encourage the development of such businesses, with its fabulous scenery, sense of community, low crime rate, good schools, attractive house prices and capable human resources.

5.3 Ilfracombe already benefits from a number of small/micro businesses and ITC would like to understand the potential for expanding this market in its area as it offers potential employment and wealth creation.

To that end ITC recognises that it must firstly understand the opportunities and trends within the sector and determine how many small and micro businesses operate within the parish.

5.4 ITC considers it important to work with existing micro businesses to gain knowledge and understanding of their needs and that of the sector. This may be achieved by for example either undertaking surveys or creating a forum to allow an exchange of information.

5.5 ITC also appreciates that it does not necessarily have in-house expertise to undertake this task alone so it is essential it works with the business community to deliver benefits.

5.6 Knowledge will allow the town either directly or indirectly to create a promotional plan for the town, targeted at the micro business market. ITC believes that potential for this market could be a significant contributor to the growth and economic expansion of our town.

- 5.7 Once a promotional plan has been developed ITC believes that it should be actively promoted at events such as exhibitions, property road shows and industry events.
- 5.8 To encourage micro businesses it is essential that we are at the forefront of the rural telecommunications revolution. We need to work closely with infrastructure providers, such as BT, to ensure that the high speed broadband is available to all of our community and particularly to businesses at Mullacott Business Park.
- 5.9 Use One Ilfracombe's regular engagement with local businesses to understand their current needs and concerns. Encourage businesses to engage with One Ilfracombe as a representative body.
- 5.10 Promote the use of the Welcome Pack to larger businesses as a tool to assist them in recruiting staff from outside of the area.



Image: Ilfracombe TIC

## Objective 6

### Welcome and exploit renewable energy opportunities

- *Promote Ilfracombe as renewable energy friendly*
- *Support tidal/wave energy and offshore wind projects*
- *Promote upgrading of older buildings as product test laboratories for new energy conservation products that blend the aesthetics of the architecture*
- *Support energy conservation and efficiency*
- *Promote energy efficiency over conservation, where Conservation Area Status applies*
- *Promote energy information and efficiency savings to residents*
- *Support and promote energy security where appropriate*
- *Use cooperative principles to deliver affordable energy options*

- 6.1 Investment in renewable energy development and delivery is an expanding and maturing industry. With Government having committed to international targets there is a need for all sectors of society to play their part in reducing the effects of global warming.
- 6.2 North Devon has experienced pressure from private companies to allow the development of wind farms to help deliver the UK's 'green' energy requirements. We have managed to maintain our coastal conservation area free of windmills whilst supporting the Fullabrook development and three units in Mullacott Business Park. With the loss of Government subsidies we are likely to see a drastic reduction in applications to erect further windmills. Any future application must be considered on its merits and we must ensure that no windmills encroach on the coastal preservation area.
- 6.3 ITC has adopted a policy of supporting well thought through renewable energy proposals, providing they take account of the local landscape, prove their effectiveness, which includes measures to reduce the UK carbon footprint, whilst delivering real benefits to the local community. Any application for solar farms within the coastal preservation area will be opposed.
- 6.4 ITC, in considering renewable proposals adjacent to the AONB (National Landscapes), will give due regard to actual benefits available to the town if development progressed. ITC would also consider other targeted inward investment from energy companies.
- 6.5 Ilfracombe coastline has the second highest tidal range in the world. The ability to harness tidal and wave power is yet to be finessed. ITC will encourage and support the experimentation and development of technology to harness this natural energy.

6.6 There is an increasing need to insulate our homes to better standards, both to conserve heat and reduce energy costs. In new buildings this is relatively easy to implement through the Building Regulations. In existing properties the Building Regulations do not normally apply when renovating.

Older properties represent the majority of the country's housing stock. Period properties are especially difficult to upgrade without impacting upon architectural features. The town has diverse architectural styles and types.

ITC wishes to promote upgrading of period properties. ITC believes that the town could act as a living laboratory for leading product developers who could trial new products to determine effectiveness and suitability. This policy will require the support of the Local Planning Authority.

Trial study products could then be promoted and demonstrated to those issuing specifications, planning officers, designers and users, which indirectly would increase the town's exposure to potential future tourists.

6.7 ITC will support and encourage energy conservation and efficiency in all areas of the community and review and upgrade its own property periodically. This could take the form of proactive marketing of current best practice in the industry.

## Objective 7

### Support initiatives to make Ilfracombe an important port, passenger and car ferry gateway linking the West Country, South Wales and Ireland

- *Work in partnership with Ilfracombe Harbour Board*
- *Support all proposals for ferry links to South Wales and design suitable transport links from the harbour to the town centre*
- *Ensure all Ilfracombe organisations have contact with Welsh equivalents*
- *Encourage and support the fishing and leisure fleets*

7.1 Ilfracombe's harbour is its largest and most important tourist attraction. Its future is vital to the success of Ilfracombe's tourism industry and it should be protected carefully, but developed proactively and creatively. Ilfracombe Harbour has the natural advantage of being, not only the largest harbour on the North Devon coast, but the only harbour 'of safe haven' (port of refuge) between Watchet and Padstow.

The harbour has always held great importance for the town, not only for its tourism draw but also for its fishing and boating activities. Along with its wider tourism benefits, the harbour is a significant employer and contributor to the town's economy.

7.2 The harbour is the biggest single asset that has the potential to rejuvenate Ilfracombe and provide regeneration opportunities of sufficient scale to deliver the step-change required to ensure economic success in Ilfracombe. As a key focal point, transport gateway and centre of maritime economic and leisure activity it is recognised as a natural target for regeneration activity and a catalyst for regeneration of the town as a whole.

7.3 The Harbour is currently used for commercial fishing, ferry trips, the RNLI and increasing sporting and leisure activities. To maximise its potential, the Harbour needs to provide deep water berths and more protection to attract an increasing number, as well as larger and more lucrative, leisure craft, together with ferries and cruise liners.

ITC therefore supports the development of a Northern Breakwater and marina (the option described as the Full Harbour Development Scenario in a 2010 report by GHK Consulting) which significantly increases the functionality of the harbour and provides the opportunity to create a 280-berth marina and harbourside developments.

The GHK report states that the Northern Breakwater option "best meets the vision for the harbour in delivering a high quality tourist offer while becoming a key 'Maritime Gateway' for leisure and commercial vehicles".

This option would also accommodate potential Marine Energy Park/Tidal Demonstration Zone support vessels and this is supported by the Economic Development Team at NDC, the Harbour Board and One Ilfracombe

- 7.4 Management of the harbour is through North Devon Council's Harbour Board. The current constitution of the Harbour Board does not guarantee ITC representation.
- As the harbour is of such immense strategic importance to the town, this needs to be addressed with ITC representation on the board. As the Harbour Board action plan calls for "greater stakeholder access to decision making", this principle should be supported by the Harbour Board.
- 7.5 ITC supports the development of new passenger ferry routes, including those with South Wales and Ireland as well as the introduction of car ferry links but does not support the introduction of larger commercial vehicle ferry services due to the extensive alteration and major infrastructure that would be required.
- The introduction of large transport vehicles would likewise be inappropriate to the setting, layout and tourism positioning of the town. The more modest infrastructure to support both car and passenger ferries should be actively encouraged.
- 7.6 Although Ilfracombe is a quality destination in its own right, it is recognised that usage of South Wales and Ireland ferry services will also be by those using Ilfracombe as a stepping stone to other destinations.
- Endeavours should be made to ensure that all visitors to Ilfracombe, whether passing through or visiting specifically should find the experience pleasant and unproblematic. Connections from car parks to the harbour should be regular, reliable and comfortable and opportunities to 'tour' Ilfracombe's sights should also be supported.
- Ilfracombe's hills and slopes should be an attraction, not an obstacle for the lesser-abled including the disabled, elderly and young families. Therefore more accessible connections between the harbour, seafront and High Street should be actively promoted and signposted accordingly.
- 7.7 The harbour should be an important strand of the town's marketing strategy, not only as a visitor attraction but also to the maritime industry nationally and internationally, once the facilities described earlier, are in place to attract the higher-end yachting and cruise community.
- 7.8 The harbour should become a focal point for recreational activities, not only for local clubs including the yacht and gig clubs, but also as an attraction in its own right offering recreational water sports such as kayaking, canoeing, diving, sailing and rafting. The opening of the Watersports Hub at Larkstone Cove will support a range of coastal activities for residents and visitors alike.
- 7.9 Once connections have been made with South Wales and beyond through regular ferry services, relationships should be developed and maintained with counterparts in these areas to ensure maximum benefit from the new links and the visitor, business and educational potential these will bring.



## Objective 8

### Promote our great cultural offering

- *Adopt and follow Ilfracombe's Cultural Plan as developed by Things Made Public*
- *Ensure the theatre is utilised fully for community and tourism*
- *Support aquarium, museum and Tunnels Beaches holiday attractions etc*
- *Support and promote good quality retail experience*
- *Promote Ilfracombe as a quality arts and culinary destination*

8.1 Ilfracombe has a long and colourful theatre history and a strong music and arts community. The Landmark Theatre, a 483-seat theatre plus open performance space should be supported to ensure the quality and standard of its cultural offering.

It is a key aim of the tourism strategy within this document that Ilfracombe targets niche and higher spending markets. Higher-spend tourists demand higher quality cultural products and Ilfracombe's theatre should aim to cater more fully for this audience.

The programme at the Landmark has been able to move away from the traditional 'Summer Show' and is now providing a selection of performances to cater for most tastes. The size of the theatre restricts the engagement of top named performers but to its credit it has been able to maintain a program of quality with some very entertaining acts. Promoting the shows to the local community remains a problem and ITC needs to ensure that the theatre program is promoted.

8.2 Other attractions contribute to Ilfracombe's cultural offering including the Museum, Aquarium and the many art galleries. These must be supported and promoted and it is essential that a new home for the Museum is found as soon as possible.

8.3 Ilfracombe's built environment has an interesting history and the books produced by Jim Bates put a new perspective on buildings that we tend to take for granted. The importance of these buildings together with the town's vast maritime history is undersold and there are many opportunities that should be exploited and publicised.

8.4 The Ilfracombe Cultural Plan (2024) has created 5 core needs for Ilfracombe's cultural offering; Protect Our Wellbeing, Be Custodians of Heritage, Amplify Our Youth, Celebrate Our Environment and Supercharge Our Economy. These are supported by 5 assets that are a key to a flourishing culture in Ilfracombe; the Community Vigour of our strong culture of volunteering, community and independent businesses; the rich creativity of the Cultural Cluster of artists and cultural organisations that we have; the Force of Nature of our landscape, sea and wild surrounds; our Riveting History; and our strong reputation as a Visitor Destination.

8.5 The Cultural Plan should be delivered in collaboration with a variety of key identified cultural stakeholders with an aim to deliver projects based on the action plans within the document. There should be a focus on creating "shelf ready" projects which can be parked until a suitable funding match becomes available whilst also taking advantage of some of the quick wins which can be addressed quickly.

# **SECTION 3:**

# **HEALTH & WELLBEING**

## Objective 9

### Deliver improvements for Ilfracombe residents

- *Provide health & wellbeing services within the community*
- *Map current health and wellbeing services*
- *Engage with the community to find out what works well and what can be improved*
- *Continue to support programmes that focus on prevention activities*
- *Support delivery of services that promote healthy lifestyle choices*
- *Maintain readiness to support any pandemic response initiative*
- *Continue to work collaboratively with partner organisations for the benefit of residents' health and wellbeing*

- 9.1 The Board of One Ilfracombe has members representing all the public agencies responsible for health matters in our community. ITC will endeavour to work with the Board to coordinate the health and wellbeing service it provides for the town and to map the various services available.
- 9.2. ITC works closely with the One Ilfracombe Wellbeing Team, which residents can access through a GP referral to a social prescriber. The team provides a range of support for social needs, from help with form-filling to signposting to government agencies, support groups, and a range of health and arts-related activities. Encouraging healthy lifestyle choices and facilitating access to physical exercise are also part of a remit that seeks to highlight the importance of prevention in maintaining personal health and wellbeing. The team's work is carried out in partnership with NHS services, community and voluntary sector provision, and non-health services such as Jobcentre Plus, education providers, the Fire and Rescue Service and housing providers.
- 9.3. ITC will seek to alleviate, where possible, the underlying causes of Ilfracombe's health inequalities, recognising that the determinants of health outcomes include factors such as their living conditions, employment situation and socio-economic position.
- 9.4. ITC will maintain its readiness to intervene in the case of a major health emergency, following its successful mobilisation of the local community during the 2020 outbreak of Covid-19. Within days, ITC secured the help of more than 300 volunteers, created a database, produced 5,000 contact cards (giving residents details of emergency services, chemists, and the volunteer coordinator for their street), and set up separate Facebook groups for different parts of the town.
- 9.5 The One Ilfracombe Living Well forum is a well-established monthly meeting of people working at the front line of health and wellbeing within the town. Members range from GPs, hospital and social care teams through to volunteers, schools and business owners. The monthly meetings are a networking opportunity where members around the table can share any updates, successes and support they may need, plus there are guest speakers at each meeting who share with the group new or updated initiatives that they are running/hoping to run in the town. An Ilfracombe Town Councillor will usually attend these meetings and the Project Officer who co-ordinates the meeting circulates minutes to the council so that they are aware of what the group are working on.

## Objective 10

### Better managed support for OUR socially dependent residents

- *Identify institutions that impose social dependants on us and deflect*
- *Avoid designating houses for HMOs*
- *Ensure most vulnerable are aware and take up opportunities for personal development and advancement*
- *Ensure sufferers of disadvantaged/discrimination are offered support*
- *Ensure people are connected to available services through the One Ilfracombe Wellbeing Team and the Ilfracombe Centre*

10.1 Supported living providers provide housing for vulnerable adults, the majority of whom are from out of the area. ITC believes that such providers should primarily be supporting Ilfracombe's vulnerable adults and not those of other towns and cities. It will therefore seek to engage with other councils and regional authorities to dissuade them from continuing to direct such individuals to Ilfracombe, which now has a disproportionate number of residents in receipt of incapacity benefit as a result of such policies. ITC endorses the work of groups to support disadvantaged people in Ilfracombe, particularly Belle's Place, the local branch of the Salvation Army and the Ilfracombe Food Bank.

10.2 The legacy of a large number of multi-storey Victorian dwellings together with the decline in the B&B trade and increase of lower incomes in the local population has led to a high proportion of buildings converted into Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs).

Although some of these provide needed affordable accommodation and prevent social isolation, many are in a poor state with below standard and inadequate facilities. Even when those in such premises have moved to better accommodation, their places are taken by new tenants, often with landlords targeting those claiming benefits from other towns and cities.

This needs to be tackled by working with NDC: given the links between both mental and physical health and an individual's housing, the existing stock should be upgraded to ensure a safe and healthy living environment; planning policy should be aimed at reducing the number of HMOs in the town; the remaining HMOs should be licensed, and minimum standards imposed; the provision of affordable housing should be a balance between purchase/shared equity schemes and rental. We will support targeted interventions to improve the poorest quality housing stock managed by landlords.

10.3 A number of agencies have recognised Ilfracombe's housing problems and have put resources into tackling them. Through One Ilfracombe, ITC is well-placed to bring these agencies together to create an overall housing strategy for the town. The strategy will have input from agencies that provide housing advice, private sector housing management, and social landlords. This process will improve communication between the various groups and will produce a more effective response to Ilfracombe's housing problems.



- 10.4 Vulnerable members of the community and those on long-term benefits should be encouraged and supported to find long-term employment, whilst those currently on incapacity benefit should be helped to find work that their illness or disability allows them to do. There are a number of local agencies who can help in this regard and ways should be sought to actively encourage training, skills and personal development. ITC also works to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, which places a positive duty on all public bodies to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.
- 10.5 The One Ilfracombe Wellbeing Team will allow people to be connected and directed to the correct available service that meets their needs. This should avoid the problem of vulnerable people being passed between agencies with the risk of being excluded altogether.

## Objective 11

### Maintain social cohesion and prevent social isolation

- *Continue to develop a trusted point of contact through One Ilfracombe*
- *Be recognised by other agencies as an active and key participant in social provision*
- *Increase accessibility to services*
- *One Ilfracombe to provide services the community need where possible*
- *Support One Ilfracombe's social prescribing programme*
- *Maximise joint working opportunities*
- *Work with voluntary and community sector – information sharing, planning and co-ordination*
- *Work with schools and youth services*
- *Encourage community to engage in democratic process*
- *Increase community resilience*
- *Continue to develop and expand the One Ilfracombe Town Team*
- *Seek to achieve dementia-friendly town status*

- 11.1 The Ilfracombe Centre will continue to be a trusted point of contact for those seeking assistance with a range of social problems. Our staff will be proactive in seeking the opinions of residents to identify any concerns they may have and, through ITC, will work with the One Ilfracombe Board to have them addressed by the appropriate agency or agencies.
- 11.2 As well as undertaking its statutory duties, ITC is becoming increasingly involved in the provision of health and wellbeing in the town. This is not infringing on the remit of statutory agencies but is attempting to supplement these services. ITC will work with other agencies to raise public awareness of the services available.
- 11.3 Through our Officers, ITC will advise the One Ilfracombe Board of the services that are of greatest need to our residents.
- 11.4 One Ilfracombe and ITC will continue to build on the success of the Wellbeing team and will support where possible those in our community with significant health problems.
- 11.5 ITC will endeavour to maximise the team's joint working with all agencies involved in the 'care and social' services. This also covers the voluntary sector, where the sharing of information is critical to providing a more coordinated approach.

- 11.6 Communities often feel disengaged from the democratic process, partly due to a feeling of powerlessness to effect change. ITC understands the value of having a strong Council that can draw on the various skills of its members. The opportunity to become a Councillor must be publicised well in advance of an election.
- 11.7 The Ilfracombe Town Team has proved a most successful program, bringing all 'front line' staff together to creating a team that looks beyond their own terms of reference. The daily contact between team members has helped to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour as well as improving the cleanliness of the town. ITC must encourage expansion of this Team so that more people become involved with the environment in which they live.
- 11.8 Ilfracombe has previously been recognised as a Dementia Friendly Town through the endeavours of volunteers and ITC staff. The programme of training to make people aware of this illness and how it can be recognised must be restarted so that those suffering from dementia are integrated into the community.



Image: Charmain Lovett

## Objective 12

### Maintain and build on our local culture of good nature and friendliness

- *Research, analyse and monitor community feedback*
- *Conduct surveys*
- *Generate improvement plans through One Ilfracombe*
- *Support Ilfracombe's promotional schemes*

12.1 To help deliver its strategic vision, ITC believes it should identify the town's strengths and weaknesses, giving special consideration to what the town does well.

The community is cosmopolitan, generally welcoming of new residents, supportive and generous to good causes. Whilst impossible to touch or feel this intangible community spirit, there is much anecdotal evidence from newcomers to support its presence. It can best be described as there being a real 'sense of community'.

ITC believes this to be a potentially strong marketing point for the town and wishes to better understand the nature of this asset, in order to better appreciate its value.

12.2 It is important to understand the demography of the town's citizens, as this will help to determine many policies affecting the community, such as education facilities, health requirements, social care, and support services to name but a few. ITC will work with our partners to continue to collect this data.

12.3 Charity and voluntary groups are an important sector in our town, providing financial support to individual and group causes, along with much-needed community services. They also organise tourist and community events and attractions. These groups occasionally work together, but more often work in isolation.

ITC will continue to engage and work closely with such groups, with the aim of achieving common objectives. ITC considers a coordinated approach to meeting some community challenges would deliver more and quicker benefits than via an uncoordinated route. ITC intends to create a communication pathway between itself and the third sector.

12.4 As surveys are completed and needs identified, the analysed information will be used, as necessary, to generate improvement plans. Surveys and research will also be used to update the strategic plan.



## Objective 13

### Help young people understand their value in the community and play their part in shaping the future of our town

- *Listen and talk to young people and establish communication links with the schools*
- *Provide advice and help about employment and volunteering opportunities for young people*
- *Improve the quality of things to do and places to go in Ilfracombe*
- *Ensure good communication and easy access to information for young people in Ilfracombe*

- 13.1 To improve communication with young people, ITC will seek to create a platform for them – and providers of youth services – to establish what is needed in the town. Young people from our community have been leaving the area in recent years, creating an imbalance in the local demographics. Those who do not wish to pursue a university course could be encouraged to seek higher education qualifications at a local college with a view to being employed locally. All opportunities to increase quality, non-seasonal employment should be explored in full.
- 13.2 ITC is able to engage with local schools either through Council representation among the Board of Governors and/or any Parent Teacher Associations, or by contacting the school regarding parental feedback received by Council members. Through its social media channels, ITC also seeks to highlight the work of the town's schools – whether academic, creative or performing arts-related – and to explore new collaborative projects for the benefit of pupils and the town alike. As a Specialist Arts School, the Academy reflects Ilfracombe's aspiration to excel in the creative arts.
- 13.3 One Ilfracombe has brought together local businesses and senior school pupils to ensure that students are aware of the opportunities in Ilfracombe. This initiative, named 'You're Hired', has been a great help to both parties and should continue to be supported, with a view to encouraging local businesses to create more opportunities for apprenticeships.
- 13.4 ITC is willing to support the Ilfracombe Rotary Club in its work with the Academy's Interact Club, which brings together students aged 12-18 for a variety of projects. It will also continue to work with the Junior School on projects that its pupils believe will make the town a better place.
- 13.5 ITC believes that working with young people will improve the range and quality of activities available to them. Ilfracombe has a variety of sports clubs with active youth sections, with football, rugby, tennis and table tennis being leading examples. Where appropriate, ITC will support the creation of new facilities for these groups, such as the building of a new rugby club and a further development of the skateboard park, enabling it to be used for longer in the winter months. Water sports, such as gig racing and the Y-Sail initiative, are also very popular and are now based at the Watersports Hub, which was developed with the full support of ITC.
- 13.6 Many young people are willing to volunteer for projects that make our town a better place, with the beach cleaning activities being just one example. ITC will continue to identify and encourage volunteering opportunities for young people, notably through the work of our Volunteer and Community Officer.
- 13.7 ITC, through the Ilfracombe Cultural Plan, will seek to ensure that our cultural offering - including comedy, theatre and music – includes events that cater for young people. The 'arty' and 'curious' brand should link in with showcasing work from local schools and colleges, such as Ilfracombe Academy and Petroc.

# **SECTION 4: PLACE & ENVIRONMENT**

## Objective 14 (Part 1)

### Maintain and utilise to best advantage our superb natural and built environment

- *Encourage quality initiatives that complement and enhance the built environment*
- *Develop and deliver a plan through One Ilfracombe that will seamlessly integrate the Southern Extension with the main town*
- *Ensure that the Local Plan supports ITC / One Ilfracombe objectives*
- *As the national population increases and inward migration to the south west rises, balance demand pressures with environment considerations*
- *Encourage developers to fulfil affordable home requirements under Section 106 obligations by refurbishing run-down properties within the town*
- *Balance protecting the landscape with needs for the well-being of the community*
- *Work with other statutory bodies engaged with One Ilfracombe's Town Team to develop our vision*

14.1.1 Ilfracombe boasts a wonderful array of architectural styles that chart the history and economic prosperity of the town. There are a number of listed buildings and ancient monuments and a Conservation area that is designed to preserve the area and conserve period buildings within it. It is unfortunate that many post war developments fail to relate to our more senior buildings, tending to stand alone in style, having followed national trends in design.

The introduction of national guidelines have contributed to the inflexible approach to development which has often resulted in the local vernacular being ignored in preference to unimaginative functional architecture. ITC will continue to oppose poor design.

14.1.2 ITC is committed to encouraging a good mix of homes being developed within the area especially family housing, as well as some homes needing to be of high value, thereby attracting high net worth homeowners. This would be in keeping with the aspirational demographic profile envisaged for the town.

14.1.3 Development considerations should not just be focused on buildings, but also encompass such features as street signs, street furniture, commercial advertising signs, soft and hard landscaped surfaces, public art, monuments and utility company apparatus.

There has been an inconsistent approach to signage, pavement finishes etc. over recent decades leaving the High Street in particular without an established qualitative theme, other than from the buildings themselves. ITC considers this no longer acceptable and would like to work with other agencies to redress this matter. In summary ITC would like to see a consistent approach to quality and design to enhance the public realm.

14.1.4 The emerging Local Plan must be seen to be supporting the objectives of this Strategy.

14.1.5 As the population increases there is a continual demand for more housing and this must be balanced with environmental considerations. In Ilfracombe we are content for our population to grow to around 15,000 which we regard as a level which will sustain local businesses throughout the year. The Southern Extension, the developments at the Shields, Worth Road and the Biclescombe Nurseries site and the conversion of holiday accommodation to permanent dwellings will go some way to achieving this goal. ITC cannot at this stage condone any further expansion of its town boundary.

14.1.6 The provision of affordable housing in our town is an important consideration and there have been far too few such homes provided over the past 20 years.

Developers who carry out significant sized developments are required to provide affordable housing as part of the agreed terms for allowing development. ITC understands this principle for achieving inclusive communities. However, in some developments it would be inappropriate to include such dwellings as they would undermine the type of quality scheme proposed.

ITC believes that developers should be allowed to fulfil their affordable housing liability by converting run-down existing buildings in the town. The location of the affordable housing scheme would not have to be geographically close to the proposed development site.

14.1.7 ITC is mindful of the natural landscape surrounding its built environment and this land is regarded as having a high value. ITC will need to be convinced of the benefit to the town's community before considering any development on this land. This statement relates particularly to the harbour area.

14.1.8 ITC would like to be at the forefront of change. ITC enjoys a good working relationship with the Local Planning Authority and would like to build on this to ensure that the local view is accurately represented. Regular meetings of the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board is supporting this relationship and beginning to deliver more development and quality development. Regular contact must be maintained with the owners of 'stalled' sites and other agencies to assist in finding ways of progressing. ITC is keen to work with others to deliver our vision. We encourage ITC Councillors who are also NDC Councillors to sit on the District Planning Authority.

14.1.9 The One Ilfracombe Town Team are a multi-agency forum that meet to discuss the safety, appearance and cleanliness of the town. They are informed via several pathways including the Report It! system and general community feedback, councillor information and partner organisation intelligence. The Town Team are made up of a number of organisations and groups including North Devon Council, Devon County Council Highways, Devon & Cornwall Police and Ilfracombe District Business & Tourism Association.

## Objective 14 (Part 2)

### Maintain and utilise to best advantage our superb natural and built environment

- *Encourage other stakeholders controlling gateway routes beyond our parish to support our objectives*
- *Support the delivery of sustainable communities*
- *Seek to apply some control over Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) expenditure, including the development of Neighbourhood Plans where appropriate*
- *We want to be influential in all Ilfracombe's 106 negotiations and allocations*
- *Encourage the community to respect its environment*
- *Encourage and seek a sustainable future for the historic environment*
- *Support and encourage the delivery of new quality infrastructure and youth facilities*
- *Support the concept of a community health hub, which may involve the Tyrrell Hospital*
- *Promote and support crime reduction initiatives*

14.2.1 In the past Ilfracombe was one of the premier holiday destinations with direct rail and sea links to major urban areas. With changing holiday trends and the loss of those links the town has to be more skilled in attracting visitors. The resort is determined to appeal to a cross-section of visitors.

Access to the town must be better signed and approaches sufficiently attractive to entice visitors to come to our town in preference to other local destinations.

Cycle ways are an important connective route with other local holiday destinations. Ilfracombe forms the start of the coast-to-coast cycle route across Devon. We support initiatives to develop this further. ITC is determined to ensure the last link of the cycleway is made between Braunton and Ilfracombe.

14.2.2 The population across the UK is generally ageing as a result of lower birth rates and people living longer. Ilfracombe is a popular retirement destination and the North coast has become a very popular location for holiday home ownership.

ITC considers it important to maintain sustainable communities. Whilst the town has many appealing attributes for young people and families – low crime rates, good schools, and a wonderful environment, further progress must be achieved. ITC will support imaginative ways in which we can help retain our young people and families. The provision of adequate housing, suitable employment, and a pleasant environment are steps toward achieving this goal.

14.2.3 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will provide some financial benefit to our community and ITC will be in a position to control these funds. It is important that these funds are used to promote our vision and, if deemed beneficial, used to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for part or all of the town.

14.2.4 It is important that ITC has an influence on the spending of section 106 contribution from developers.

14.2.5 So often a section of society fails to recognise the value of the local built environment. This can lead to either wanton or accidental damage or even neglect of buildings and public areas. ITC would like to find ways in which to reach out to this section so that they understand the importance of respecting and looking after our environment.

14.2.6 The rich choice of period architecture is an asset to the town. However, a number of the larger commercial buildings were developed to meet a demand now greatly diminished.

For example a number of quality hotels were developed during the Victorian period, but no longer meet the requirements of the modern discerning visitor. The ability to renovate to meet modern commercial and regulatory requirements is either cost prohibitive or structurally impossible.

ITC recognises that such properties could have reached a stage of economic obsolescence. ITC is keen to see the essence of the character of such buildings retained, but modern uses found. This will inevitably result in compromise. ITC accepts that a flexible approach to considering alternative uses must be maintained.

In the case of landmark period buildings, ITC, in consideration of any proposals, will take into account any wider community benefits provided by development. In exceptional circumstances ITC might be willing to consider demolition of less significant buildings and their replacement, but any such consideration will be subject to, and have to pass, a number of stringent tests, before support could be offered.

14.2.7 ITC wishes to explore ways in which the infrastructure of the town can be improved to better serve tourists and residents alike.

The development of the harbour with the creation of a better commercial quay and marina facilities are considered a priority. A public consultation undertaken through the Coastal and Market Towns Initiative identified that a marina complex was the greatest priority.

ITC continues to support this priority, recognising that it would help considerably the economic regeneration of the town. There is much evidence elsewhere around the UK coastline to confirm that such investment would deliver strategic results.

ITC does however appreciate the significant challenge and potential risk of focusing solely upon promoting a marina scheme during times of public finance austerity. The likelihood of achieving such development without significant public funding appears remote. Whilst ITC will continue to promote it, this will not be at the exclusion of more realistic opportunities.

ITC is also keen to see a focus on youth facilities and amenities in the town.

14.2.8 The Lantern is an asset for the community and ITC aims for it to be sustainable for the future.

14.2.9 Ilfracombe is fortunate in that it has a relatively low crime rate, but the Authorities must not be complacent. Continual review is important. In the case of new developments, design should be such as to minimise crime risks.

## Objective 15

### Improve public transport, traffic management and infrastructure within and to the town

- *Support the improvement of the infrastructure in and out of Ilfracombe*
- *Support initiatives for a Park and Ride service*
- *Support direct coaches to Tiverton Parkway – Heathrow – Victoria*
- *Support increased and improved Tarka Line rail services*
- *Support frequent, comfortable and convenient town services*
- *Develop a local traffic management plan*
- *Support better signage in and towards the town*

15.1 Part of Ilfracombe's coastal charm lies in its geographical position, having a feeling of peaceful seclusion, bordered as it is to the north by sea and to east and west by hills. However, this seclusion should not lead to isolation through inadequate traffic routes from the main commercial hub to the south. Improvements to traffic flow through Braunton on the A361 will be supported along with improvements to the A399 tourist route.

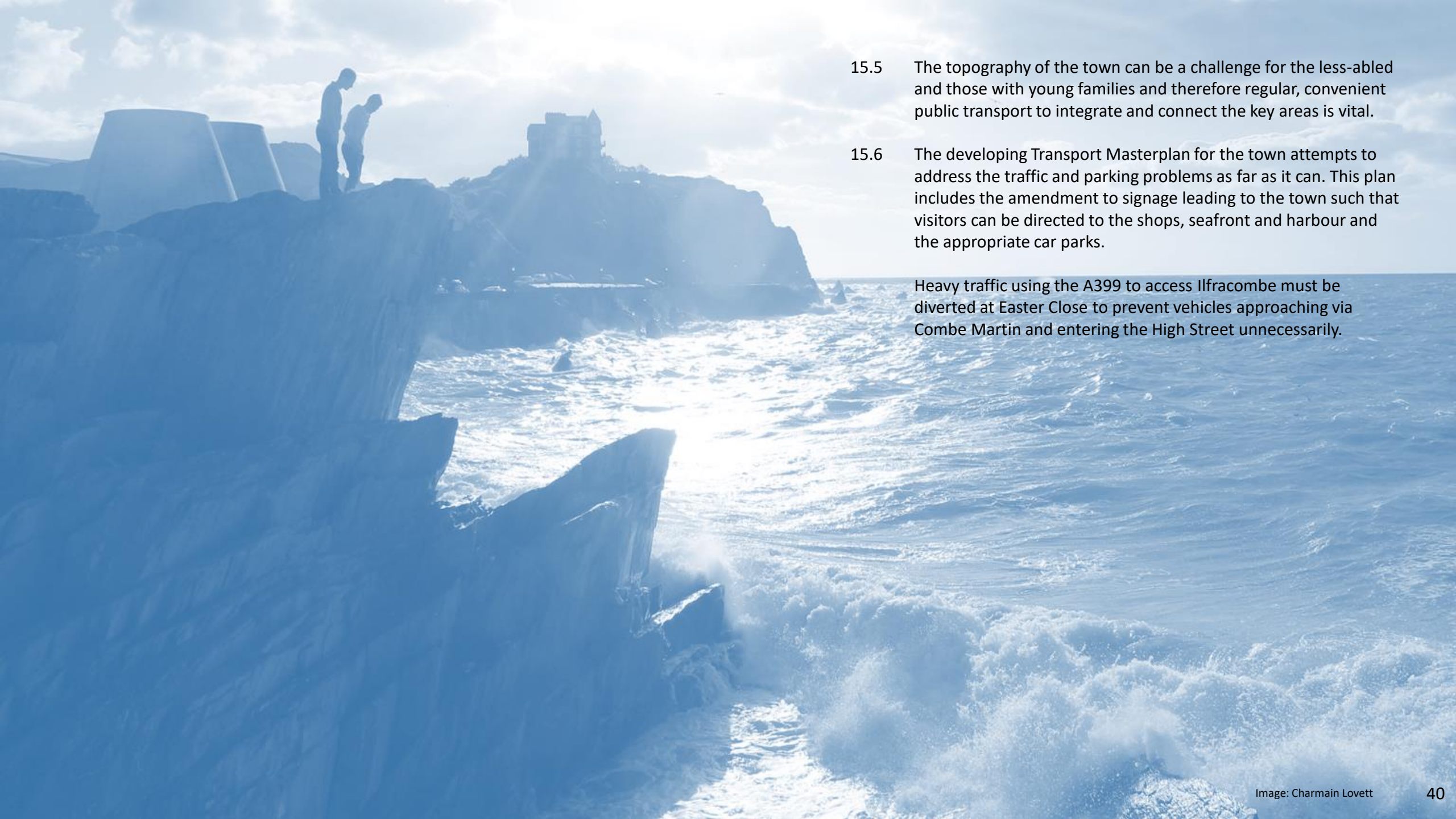
15.2 The parking for the seafront/harbour area has been improved with the opening of the Ropery Road car park. Town centre parking remains a problem as existing car parks are inconvenient for a 'quick' shop.

The existing car parks still have capacity problems during the peak holiday season and a Park & Ride scheme should be revisited for use during this period. The developing Traffic Masterplan proposes to pedestrianise The Quay during parts of the summer season and if this is achieved then a Park & Ride facility will become essential.

15.3 Ilfracombe's isolated position is compounded by a lack of coordination in its public transport services. Train and bus timetables are compiled independently and frequently result in a wait of 45 minutes before connection. There should be co-ordination between bus and rail timetables; the existing Devon County Council funding should be used to leverage this.

Opportunities exist for an express bus service direct to Tiverton Parkway railway station and ITC would support the introduction of such a service. ITC has also made clear to National Express its support for the reintroduction of an express link to Victoria Coach Station.

15.4 We must support and lobby for improvements to the Tarka Line service to Exeter.



- 15.5 The topography of the town can be a challenge for the less-abled and those with young families and therefore regular, convenient public transport to integrate and connect the key areas is vital.
- 15.6 The developing Transport Masterplan for the town attempts to address the traffic and parking problems as far as it can. This plan includes the amendment to signage leading to the town such that visitors can be directed to the shops, seafront and harbour and the appropriate car parks.

Heavy traffic using the A399 to access Ilfracombe must be diverted at Easter Close to prevent vehicles approaching via Combe Martin and entering the High Street unnecessarily.



## Objective 16

### Improve public places, particularly the High Street and seafront and promote connectivity

- *Make the High Street more pedestrian friendly*
- *Introduce shared space schemes in the High Street and seafront*
- *Promote quality retail outlets and encourage a condensed shopping area*
- *Support conversion of shops to residential where appropriate*
- *Support a new scheme for the seafront with the backing of the community*
- *Support the continued regeneration of Fore Street and other quality townscape improvements*
- *Support a scheme to make The Quay pedestrian friendly*
- *Ensure peripheral street works are consistent in quality reflecting our standards*
- *Encourage good waste and recycling management*
- *Support as appropriate works to protect our vulnerable areas from flooding*
- *Support the Cultural Plan and other street art projects to revitalise and reinvigorate forgotten space and grot spots*

16.1 Ilfracombe's High Street is one of the town's three key attractions identified in the Terence O'Rourke<sup>3</sup> report, the other two being the harbour and seafront. The High Street has many strengths – an attractive and interesting mix of quality architecture, mainly Victorian but also including fine examples from other periods; a large number of independent retailers giving an individual 'curious' feel; and a vibrancy due in part to the contained nature of its retail offering.

Its weaknesses are that many of the buildings are poorly maintained and shabby, and there are a number of empty shops. A lack of parking and road congestion are frequent complaints.

16.2 The main arterial road along the northern coast of Devon passes through Ilfracombe High Street, which means that it carries a high level of traffic. ITC is ready to work with other agencies to deliver improvements, which might involve solutions such as re-routing, pedestrianisation and/or the introduction of shared surfaces.

16.3 The High Street has its fair share of 'Pound' shops and Charity shops and many shop fronts are in need of upgrading. In order to promote a better shopping experience, it is necessary for existing shops to make their offering more attractive and to encourage new quality shops to open. The shopping area can be condensed to provide a more vibrant retail area whilst the extremities of the High Street may lend themselves to offices or residential use.

<sup>3</sup> Ilfracombe Town Centre Study October 2005 – Terence O'Rourke

- 16.4 Utilise to best advantage the architecture of the High Street. Landlords should be encouraged to adopt shopfronts that do not appear visually disconnected from the rest of the building - thereby detracting from its overall appearance. Instead, shopfronts should be decorated in a way that enables the building to be viewed as a single entity. Some good and poor examples of this can be found in the NDC Conservation Officer's presentation of July 2010. Shop signage should not be allowed to detract from the building and should be in keeping with its overall design. Opportunities to promote a town/heritage colour palette should be explored, as should funding applicable to buildings within a conservation area.
- 16.5 The seafront is looking 'tired' and NDC and ITC have developed a seafront masterplan, which will be implemented when funds are available.
- 16.6 ITC will encourage the development of derelict sites around the town.
- 16.7 Fore Street is one of the oldest streets in Ilfracombe and has tremendous charm and character, together with many quality pubs and restaurants. The Ropery Road car park provides much needed convenient parking and we must now support the continued enhancement of Fore Street and emphasise its importance as a link to the High Street.
- 16.8 When street works are required for utility works or road repairs, the finished product should match the existing pavement or street surface and all finished works should be inspected for quality of finish and consistency. Local authorities and contractors should be made aware of this policy prior to works beginning and encouragement should be given to authorities to ensure this is a requirement of consent.
- 16.9 Cleanliness of the town continues to be a priority for residents. The prevalence of seagulls and the topography of the town mean that household waste is frequently strewn about the streets. ITC will continue to work with NDC to ensure an effective waste and recycling service, while also supporting the litter-picking by ITC staff and volunteers. For its part, the One Ilfracombe Town Team will look at new initiatives. Additional recycling opportunities will be encouraged, for example, and a strategy for reducing the nuisance caused by gulls in the summer months needs to be considered. Solutions also need to be found for residences with nowhere to store their wheelie refuse bins.
- 16.10 With the reality of global warming and its consequences, ITC must encourage residents to become more involved in the safety measures that need to be put in place to mitigate the results of a weather induced calamity. The Resilience Plan prepared in association with all the 'emergency' services must be publicised more widely and understood by the community.

Flooding is a major concern in any seaside resort and we must look at schemes that will prevent the worst scenario. Providing extra height on the wall around Wildersmouth Beach during the winter months is the type of scheme that can be achieved with local resources but the longer-term ambition to provide a Northern Breakwater must be pursued.

The Wilder Brook that flows through the centre of the town will be unable to cope with the type of rainfall that has been experienced in some parts of the world and it is of particular concern in the area of the museum. When development takes place on the redundant site next to Runnymede Gardens it is essential that the culvert to the sea is re-opened following its blocking during the construction of the Landmark Theatre.

16.11 ITC believes that barriers resulting in the exclusion of people who have impairments should be removed where possible. These include inflexible organisational procedures and practices, inaccessible information, inaccessible buildings, inaccessible transport and discriminatory health and social support services. The topography of our town adds a further dimensional challenge to these aspirations.

With the support of all agencies, ITC strives towards achieving a balanced community for peoples of all abilities and needs in terms of both residents and visitors to our town.

ITC will continue to support the Ilfracombe Access Group and others involved in the welfare of disabled people.

As and when funds permit, ITC would like to encourage the development of a training awareness programme that helps local businesses and organisations to understand and empathise with the needs of disabled residents and visitors, offering standards of service and accommodation that will exceed the minimum set by legislation. Social inclusion is an important aim of ITC.



## Objective 17

### Endeavour to support initiatives to operate buildings and services where they contribute to wellbeing

- *Understand community needs and be prepared to create an innovative business plan to determine viability*
- *Where viable, support the provision of facilities that have been identified as beneficial to the community*

17.1 Communities require a range of services to support their residents, spanning from youth facilities to residential and nursing care, with emergency and other essential services in between. Ilfracombe is no exception.

There is a constant pressure, especially amongst Local Authority providers to reduce and manage cost. This can sometimes manifest itself in consolidating services in one location to serve a number of communities. The purported valid arguments of either 'bigger means better' or 'economies of scale' are often used in defence of such strategies.

ITC, working in collaboration with North Devon and Devon County Councils, created the Ilfracombe Centre which opened in 2008, offering a range of advisory and support services to the community. Whilst government services are increasingly being moved to online platforms and call centres, ITC is determined to keep its services available to residents from the Ilfracombe Centre.

ITC will resist the removal or scaling down of important services within our town and will instead work with our partners to look for ways to maintain them.

One Ilfracombe is now working closely with its partners to preserve and enhance the social and healthcare provision for the community, with residents benefiting from the considerable amount of pioneering work being undertaken. ITC will continue to support these activities.

17.2 A 'drop-in' facility for young mothers has been identified as a need and ITC will work to try to support these facilities.

## Objective 18

### Raise our socioeconomic profile

- *Support / influence the performance of Ilfracombe Academy*
- *Encourage the development of new homes for our community*
- *Promote the town to potential new residents*
- *Maintain public realm in good order*
- *Promote low crime rate and work with the police to maintain good law and order*
- *Work with our partners to deliver affordable housing*

18.1 Schools play an important role in our town, not just in educating its young people, but also, by making their facilities available to the wider community.

ITC recognises that good schools help our community and add appeal to families moving to the area. Ilfracombe Academy in particular is extremely important to our town in terms of its size and its role as a sports centre. Our infant and junior schools also play a major part in serving the community as well as helping to develop our residents of tomorrow.

ITC seeks to work with One Ilfracombe to build strong connections with all three of our schools and to help the development of the town's future residents.

ITC is keen to work with and support the dedicated professional staff and volunteer governors who run and manage our schools.

18.2 With an ageing population it is clear that our traditional health service will struggle to cope with the inevitable increase in demand. Through One Ilfracombe and the Living Well initiative, ITC is determined to bring all health providers together to develop a programme that will mitigate concerns over the perceived lack of capacity in the NHS.

It is clear that poor housing, worklessness, financial worries, mental health issues and social isolation are major contributors to poor health. By addressing these problems through an integrated workforce of professionals and volunteers, it should be possible to relieve some of the pressure on our GPs and acute health provision.

ITC has established a Wellbeing Team which acts as the first port of call for those seeking advice on wellbeing matters. We have a clear ambition to get people involved in preventative means to better health, such as advice on diet, promoting more exercise and introducing people to clubs and associations that will help to address the problem of social isolation.

ITC will continue to support the Tyrrell Hospital as it fights to keep health services within the community. ITC will continue to support the Tyrrell's 'League of Friends' as they selflessly continue to raise money to enhance the services provided by the hospital and Combe Coastal GP practice.

Understanding and addressing the needs of those with mental health problems in our community is essential. As far as possible, ITC will support the professionals and volunteers working in this field through initiatives such as the Ilfracombe Mental Health Alliance and through NDVS (North Devon Voluntary Services) training opportunities.

- 18.3 ITC is convinced that a broad selection of good modern housing stock will be a factor in aiding the town's ambition to achieve prosperity. We would support initiatives by NDC to manage the balance between second homes/short-term rental properties with the pressing need for year-round accommodation for people living and working in the area.

As a tourist destination, Ilfracombe needs a comprehensive offer of accommodation types for its visitors. However, the Covid pandemic has led to a severe shortage of longer-term rental properties, an increase in monthly rental costs, and a sharp rise in the price of flats/houses for sale. ITC supports the provision of affordable homes for both rent and purchase and will work with its partners to provide affordable homes for local people. This objective would also help the town to retain its young people, many of whom aspire to home ownership.


ITC will support initiatives by North Devon Council and Devon County Council to secure central government funding for projects to improve housing and, more broadly, the built environment in the town. At a more local level, ITC supports initiatives such as the Ilfracombe Community Land Trust, which seeks to develop social housing for rent on vacant plots of land.

At the same time, ITC would like to see major improvements to older buildings in Ilfracombe, along with progress on stalled sites, notably the town's empty hotels.

With all development projects, ITC will work alongside NDC on the distribution of Section 106 funds.

- 18.4 The town has many assets – the natural and built environments, good standard of schooling, low crime rate, relatively limited traffic congestion, sense of community and access to some stunning marine and coastal activities. This should be used to attract employees to our major employers.

At the request of our major companies, who have found it difficult to recruit suitably trained staff, ITC has produced a Welcome Pack (promotional brochure) for people new to the town. This document needs to be updated on an annual basis.



18.5 Existing public areas together with proposed renovations/enhancements must be subject to robust long-term maintenance programmes. In the past, once initial capital expenditure had been committed, subsequent maintenance works often failed to protect the initial standard achieved.

A good example of this is the footpaths in the High Street, which were changed from concrete paving slabs to brick pavers at significant capital cost in the late 1980s.

More recently, when parts of the footpaths have either been excavated to allow access to below-ground utilities or have suffered deterioration that requires repair, surface reinstatement has been either of a poor standard or completed with non-consistent materials. As a result, the monetary and aesthetic values of the initial investment have been greatly eroded. This inconsistent approach to maintaining the public realm is detrimental to the town.

ITC proposes inter-agency cooperation through the Town Team, so that work can be planned at the design stage to aid both longevity and better policing after completion, thereby ensuring the fabric and character of areas are maintained to a high standard.

18.6 ITC will continue to work with the Police through the One Ilfracombe Town Team to ensure that very low crime rates are maintained. Good law and order is essential in the promotion of the town to residents and tourists and the current squeeze on police budgets makes it essential that our integrated approach to reporting crime is maintained.



## **How to implement this Strategy**

Take ownership of the strategy through Councillors, Council officers and staff and through funding initiatives. Also ensure that all of the Board Members of One Ilfracombe are fully conversant with the strategy so that all partners are working towards the same goals.

Take direct initiatives and take time to convince others.

Accept collective responsibility and most important –

**KEEP THE STRATEGY ALIVE**

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