

Porthtowan CCT Economic Plan

Introduction

Porthtowan Beach Management Group was awarded a £10K Coastal Community Team grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The aims of the grant are to support the creation of a community led team, and secondly, to produce an economic plan for the area.

Porthtowan is a Blue Flag and Keep Britain Tidy beach, and has a number of environmental projects already running under both of these schemes. Becoming a Coastal Community Team is helping to further the community involvement and support a holistic approach to improving the area as a destination and as a place to work and live.

The initial CCT application made reference to the fact that Porthtowan is already subject to an independent consultant Dune Management Plan which is looking at the management of the dunes and the beach following major storm damage to the dunes in 2014. It was the intention that the core elements of the economic plan would link with the key objectives of the Dune Management Plan. However, the publication of the latter has been delayed until spring 2016 and so this Economic Plan is a stand-alone document.

It is still intended, however, to link the two plans once the Dune Management Plan has been completed. The Beach Management Group is confident this can be achieved.

Objectives

- Improved access
- Improved online marketing
- Improved public realm
- Broaden the season to capture stronger trade in autumn/winter months
- Improved dunes and sea defences

Improved Access

The geography of Porthtowan Beach is such that access to the beach is limited for some members of public; wheelchairs and pram access are especially hindered by the steep drop down to the beach. The existing access to the beach from the main road has significant erosion and approximately 40cm shear drop; this is exacerbated when there is sand movement. The damaged access is also causing water run-off to channel the sand and water in such a way it further narrows the access.

Part of the grant will be used to build a marine grade ramp access to the beach. Consideration needs to be given to potential erosion, load bearing capacity,

longevity and revenue maintenance costs. It is intended that, in addition to the ramp, a flat and secure area is also created where prams and/or wheelchairs can have safe refuge and enjoy the beach and the location.

Importantly, the CCT funding has also helped unlock some s106 money to act as match funding to help build the ramp access.

Improved online marketing

Work is already underway via the Porthtowan Beach Association (a member of the Beach Management Group), to help coordinate the online marketing of Porthtowan. They will be coordinating the online destination marketing for Porthtowan. As such, the group is consulting businesses and community on options, including, promotional videos, web-optimisation, links from businesses to the website, etc. Part of the £10K is ring-fenced to support the preferred option after consultation has been undertaken.

Improved public realm

The public realm is in need of enhancement and it is recognised that this contributes to the “product” of Porthtowan. Part of the grant will be used to provide new signage and interpretation by the beach which will support the broader community work being undertaken to improve and conserve the dunes. One of the issues has been that planting on the dunes has been damaged by tourists, despite areas being roped off. The interpretation will help raise awareness of the work being undertaken by the community as well as improving the visitor experience in Porthtowan.

The public realm will also be subject to six-monthly audits to highlight issues in need for repair and improvement and allocate tasks to the responsible party. The Community Link Officer at Cornwall Council will undertake the audits of Porthtowan and share the reports via the Beach Management Group.

Broadening the season to capture stronger trade in the Autumn/Winter months

All of the projects being undertaken, both through CCT and Blue Flag, are aimed at improving Porthtowan as a place to visit, which in turn will have direct support for the businesses operating in the area. The CCT is realistic that broadening the season will take time but improving the sustainability of Porthtowan as a place to do business is vital to the local economy and is a medium to long-term objective.

Engaging the business community is a key part of the work being undertaken and the Porthtowan Beach Association is the business link with the CCT.

Improved Dunes and Sea Defences

As stated above, Porthtowan is subject to an independent consultation report (commissioned by Cornwall Council) which will deliver a Dune Management Plan. This will provide a framework of projects to deliver a sustainable conservation of the dunes and re-establish the natural sea defence they provide. This work sits alongside the CCT grant funded projects and forms a central part of the Porthtowan Beach Management Group's work.

What does success look like?

Increase in visitor numbers

Footfall figures will be collected quarterly throughout 2016 and 2017 to help gauge visitor levels. Whilst this only provides a snapshot on any given day, it will be supplemented with a survey of businesses to try and capture any uplift or decline in trade. The intention is to identify seasonal and annual trends. Additionally, working with Cornwall Council, car park usage will be analysed, looking at average dwell times during the main season.

The CCT would be aiming for an uplift in visitor numbers of 5% over the first 12 months (April 2016-April 2017).

Marketing/PR criteria agreed with stakeholders

The Porthtowan Beach Association will lead the consultation of the businesses and key stakeholders. This will take place up until 29th February 2016. This will lead to the production of a marketing plan which will detail how and where its share of the CCT grant will be allocated.

It will be supported by the business survey discussed above.

Success will be shown by an increase of 10% usage of the Porthtowan website for the period April 2016-April 2017.

Access "ramping" to the beach in most appropriate area

Feasibility and design options will need to be undertaken and a preferred option agreed by the end of February 2016. To avoid doing works during the early

Easter period, it is intended that the ramp be installed during April 2016 and ready for the Whitsun half-term holidays.

Improved trading environment

Cornwall Council has a Town Centre Management Specialist who will undertake a six-monthly place-based "audit" of Porthtowan. This includes looking at vacancy rates, business make up, access, parking, public realm, etc. It is important to recognise that any changes to trading environment (whether it is a town centre or village centre) do not occur immediately and many other factors come into play. However, the intention is to make for an improved trading environment via improved access, improved public realm and improved marketing. Each of these factors is reliant on the others which is why scheduled audits of Porthtowan are key to monitoring and measuring improvement.

Coordinated dune management plan

Re-growth of the dunes and coordinated planting programme is already underway and the Porthtowan Dunes Group is a key member of the CCT. Supporting the scheduled planting is vital and this will ultimately be guided by the Dunes Management Plan commissioned by Cornwall Council and due for publication in the Spring of 2016. Once this is available, the scheduled planting and dune management process will be considered fully to see where the CCT Economic Plan can work alongside it. The Dune Management Plan will be for the Beach Management Group to adopt and coordinate, and as such the CCT will be central to that.

Ultimately, success will be shown via fully restored dunes and natural sea defences. This is a medium to long term project.

Useful Indicators

- Footfall count 2016 (winter, spring, summer, autumn) 2017 (winter, spring summer, autumn)
- Consultation with Porthtowan Beach Association re marketing and PR schedule
- Season review undertaken by Porthtowan Beach Association 2016/2017
- Agreed plan and commission for ramp access improvements
- Six-monthly Porthtowan "audit" 2016 and 2017 to compare the product of Porthtowan to include businesses/vacancies/pubic realm/access/parking, etc

Review Periods

It is recognised that the Economic Plan will need periodic review and this will be facilitated via the Porthtowan Beach Management Group (the CCT) annually.

It is felt that the proposed surveys and feedback detailed above are sufficiently frequent to allow for close monitoring in between the annual reviews in order to provide early indicators of any issues, and the CCT can look to address these as and when they arise.