



Tarka Trail Coastal Community Team

***Economic Plan***

March 2017



## 1. Purpose

The purpose of our Economic Plan is to outline a vision and priorities for action to develop the economic value of the Tarka Trail for the coastal communities along its length. Our focus is upon the Trail as a potential catalyst to generate opportunities and jobs within what are often very rural communities, but we are always aware of the high quality natural environment within which the Trail sits. It is this environment, rich biodiversity and cultural heritage which make the Tarka Trail such a unique asset to the area where care is required to develop it wisely. This plan has been prepared by the Tarka Trail Coastal Community Team (CCT) and is based upon local consultation, which had prioritised both the range of issues to be addressed and the key projects to tackle them.

## 2. Context

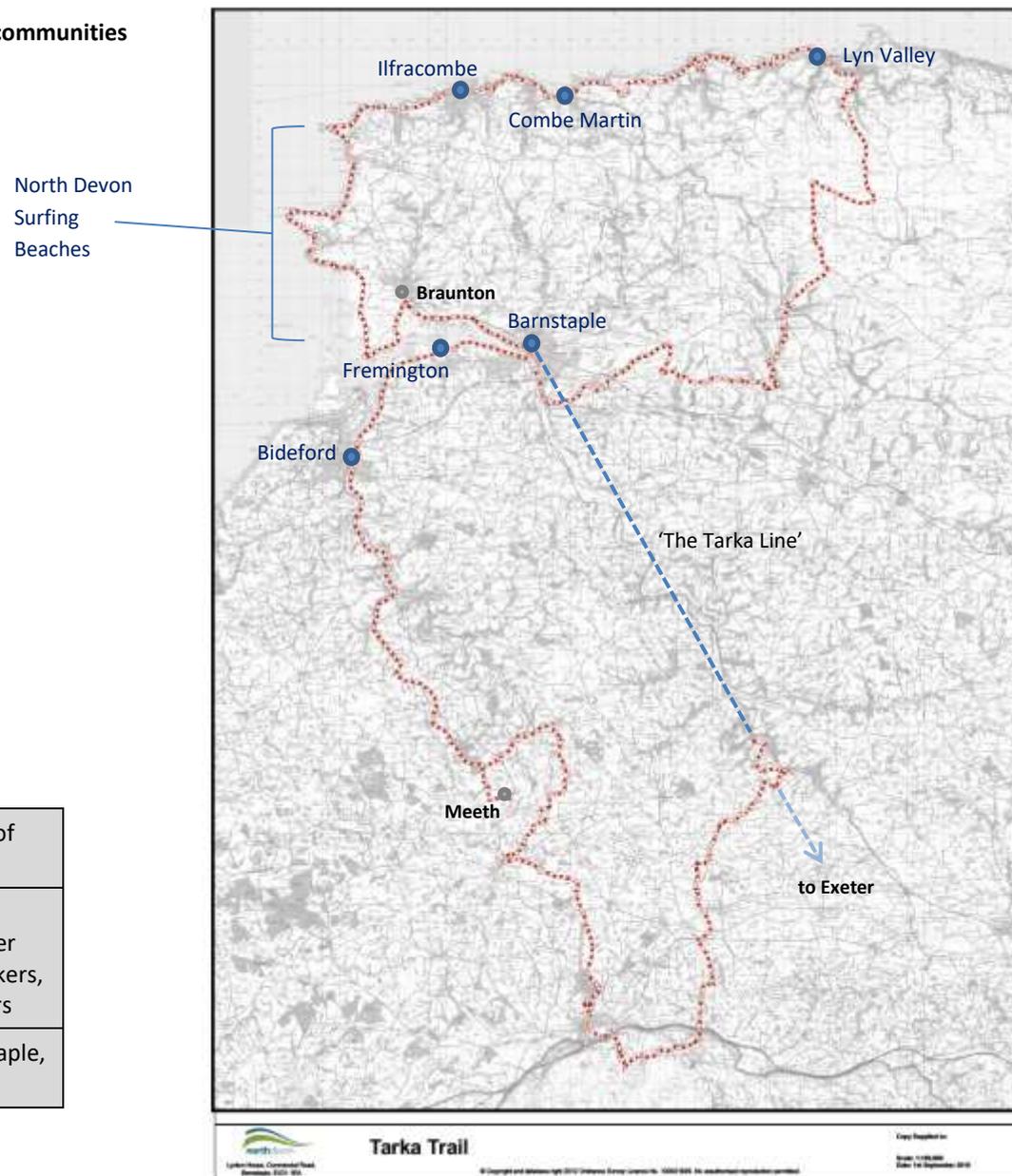
### 2.1. *The Tarka Trail and the local area*

The Tarka Trail is a 180 mile recreational route, named after the Henry Williamson novel, *Tarka the Otter*, which follows Tarka's journey through northern Devon. The route encompasses parts of both the South West Coast Path National Trail and the Two Moors Way, as well as unique sections in its own right and includes a branch rail line link to enable a 'figure-of-eight' exploration of some of Devon's most varied and stunning landscapes (see Fig. 2.1) - from deep combs and rich wooded river valleys, to rugged moorland, sandy bays, weathered cliffs, and the dramatic sweep of the Taw/Torridge estuary.

A 32 mile section from Braunton to Meeth is on disused railway lines which now forms a 'multi-use trail'. With easy gradients, this section is shared by cyclists, walkers, runners, dog walkers and wheelchair users on a daily basis and is part of the National Cycle Network (NCN27) - the Devon 'Coast to Coast' route. This portion of the Tarka Trail is referred to as the 'Multi-Use Trail' in this Plan; reference to the Tarka Trail alone refers to the entire 180 mile walking route. Horse riding is allowed on the Multi-Use Trail on a 7 mile section between Great Torrington and Petrockstowe. The Tarka Trail is part of the Devon Strategic Recreational Route Network.

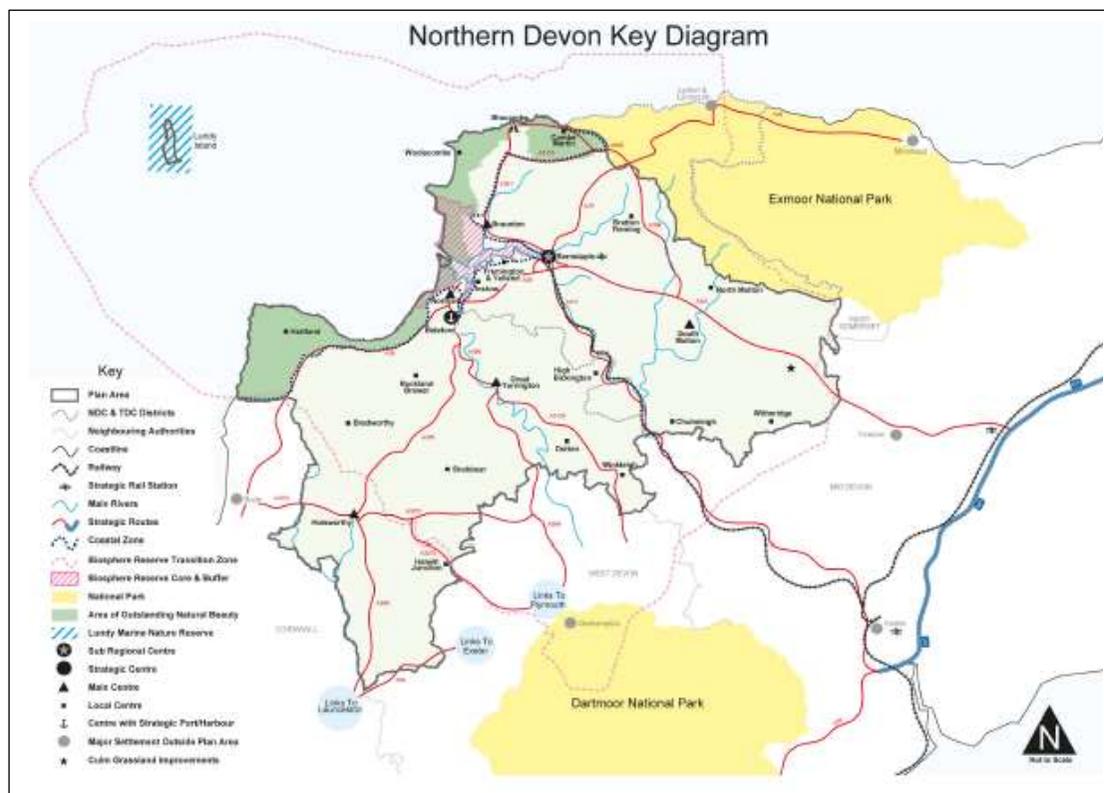
The Tarka Trail is a popular attraction amongst visitors and residents with an estimated 1 million users per annum, providing car-free options to view and experience many of the area's most impressive landscapes and historic communities. Along the route of the former railway lines, much of the heritage remains, including station buildings, platforms, impressive viaducts and wayside signs.

**Figure 2.1** The Tarka Trail links a number of communities and CCTs across northern Devon



**Terminology**

<b>The Tarka Trail</b>	The entire 180 mile walking route, some of which is Multi-Use Trail
<b>The Tarka 'Multi-Use Trail'</b>	32 mile section of the Tarka Trail from Braunton to Meeth, constructed on former railway lines and suitable for cyclists, walkers, runners, dog walkers and wheelchair users
<b>'The Tarka Line'</b>	Branch railway line from Exeter to Barnstaple, linking with the Tarka Trail



**Figure 2.2 Northern Devon environmental designations**

To the north, the Tarka Trail links a range of coastal communities along the northern Devon<sup>1</sup> coast and into Exmoor National Park, from Bideford to Lynton & Lynmouth, some of which have their own Coast Community Team (CCT), but all of which have a common interest in the development of the Trail. It is this coastal section which is the focus of this Economic Plan and falls within two District Council areas – North Devon (with administrative centre Barnstaple, which is also the Sub-regional Centre for the northern Devon area) and Torrington (administrative centre Bideford). Large portions pass through the North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (see Fig. 2.2), much of which is also noted by Natural England as Heritage Coast, and the whole of this

<sup>1</sup> Reference to 'northern Devon' throughout this plan comprises the combined District Council areas of North Devon and Torrington

coastal section is within the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, passing through the internationally important Braunton Burrows sand dunes system, the core zone of the Biosphere Reserve.

Since the first sections of the Tarka Trail were opened in the 1980s, visitor interest has progressively grown, largely without significant promotion, and there are clear signs that participation in cycling, walking and healthy exercising will continue to grow. The popularity of the Trail provides opportunities for a range of businesses, including cafes, restaurants, public houses, accommodation and cycle hire, although the scope for new development along the route, often outside of development zones and within protected landscapes, is greatly restricted. New imaginative ways need to be found to maximise the value of this significant asset for the communities and businesses along its route, and for the wider area.

As an asset shared in common across a range of northern Devon's coastal communities, the Tarka Trail has great potential to drive growth and regeneration, and to encourage and support healthy lifestyles within those same communities. This potential can only be maximised if we work together to combine our knowledge and resources, and focus our energy. This Economic Plan presents such a joined-up approach to achieve our shared aspirations for the Tarka Trail.

## **2.2. Community context**

The community context for this Economic Plan is grounded in the diverse range of coastal towns, villages and settlements along, and in proximity to, the Tarka Trail from Bideford to Lynton & Lynmouth along c. 59 miles of the route. These communities include:

- Lynton & Lynmouth (parish population of 1,441 in 2011)<sup>2</sup>
- Combe Martin (2,687)
- Ilfracombe (11,509)
- Morteohoe (including Woolacombe) (1,637)
- Georgeham (including Croyde) (1,440)
- Braunton (8,128)
- Barnstaple (24,033)
- Fremington Quay (10,529)

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<sup>2</sup> Census 2011

- Instow (706)
- Bideford (16,610)

Whilst the size and nature of these communities varies greatly (the above list includes the three largest towns in the area, each with pockets of significant deprivation), there are also strong characteristics that are common to the wider northern Devon area. The *Northern Devon Joint Sustainable Community Strategy*<sup>3</sup> highlighted a number of shared area-wide community issues:

- Low skills, low wages and low productivity - *“we will need to work together to raise aspirations and develop the economy to provide opportunities that will grow, retain and attract talented people”*
- High fuel, energy and fuel prices in rural communities
- Health and quality of life issues, including access to appropriate housing, services, cultural and leisure services
- Managing and mitigating the impact of sudden change e.g. extreme weather, animal diseases
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Retaining and attracting young people

There are also strong similarities between strategies that have been developed to respond to these issues. Five of the above communities have established CCTs and Economic Plans (Lynton & Lynmouth (Lyn Valley), Ilfracombe, Barnstaple, Fremington Quay and Bideford) and, at the time of writing, a further two (Combe Martin and North Devon Surfing Beaches) are in the process of developing their plans. Amongst the five existing plans, a key focus is upon on the development of their visitor economies (as a strategy to generate new opportunities and employment), by leveraging the value of their core assets - their unique character, culture, heritage and environmental features. This Economic Plan is similar in its aims and aspirations, but rather than focus on a single community, it is the result of collaboration across communities around a strategic asset of shared interest.

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<sup>3</sup> Northern Devon Partnership (2009)

### **2.3. The local economy**

The *Northern Devon Economic Strategy 2014-2020*<sup>4</sup> highlights a number of key characteristics of the northern Devon economy:

- A primarily rural and isolated area - one of the most rural areas of England
- A high quality environment that attracts tourists, second home owners and retirees
- Wage levels amongst the lowest of all UK districts
- A high dependence upon tourism and agriculture
- A predominantly small business economy
- Poor connectivity to the rest of the county, with only one railway line terminating in Barnstaple
- A largely self-contained economy – most residents work within the area

Locally, however, there is some variation across the Tarka Trail coastal area. Whilst Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe are important market towns, providing health, education, retail and employment for their local areas, and in the case of Barnstaple as the area's sub-regional centre, drawing in people from the wider area; the outlying communities have less critical mass and provide only limited local services.

During the tourism season however, the rural context and traditional character of these outlying communities are positive attractions for visitors, particularly along the Tarka Trail coast, bolstering resident numbers during the summer months many times over. Consequently, there is a very heavy reliance upon tourism within these communities, with significant numbers of tourism businesses clustered around the coast. The Tarka Trail is also a potential catalyst for growth in these areas and a number of businesses have successfully developed custom linked to the Trail, including accommodation, food and drink, and cycle hire businesses; although planning restrictions constrain commercial development along much of the Trail's length. A planning application has been lodged as part of the work of the Fremington Quay CCT to convert a derelict water tower to a potter's studio, with a small retail outlet - we wish to replicate this type of appropriately scaled development to encourage other business opportunities along other parts of the Trail.

Across northern Devon, strategic tourism priorities have been to attract more visitors outside of the main season and to increase the value of tourism, in particular targeting higher value markets, including activity markets<sup>5</sup>. The national strategy for tourism<sup>6</sup> goes further and encourages initiatives that increase the distinctiveness of destinations, that enhance the visitor experience, and that might have international appeal. In developing the visitor economy linked to the unique Tarka Trail, our Plan supports these strategic approaches.

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<sup>4</sup> North Devon Council & Torrington District Council

<sup>5</sup> See for example *North Devon Tourism Strategy 2005-2015*

<sup>6</sup> Visit England (2010) *Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010-2020*

## 2.4. Related initiatives

There are a number of local initiatives which are relevant to this plan:

<p><b>Other Coastal Community Teams</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key links are being made to Coastal Community Teams (CCTs) in the area and their Economic Plans, which are already established in Ilfracombe, the Lyn Valley, Barnstaple, Fremington and Bideford, and are emerging in Combe Martin and for North Devon’s Surfing Beaches. Each of these communities lies upon the route of the Tarka Trail.</li> <li>• This Economic Plan does not seek to duplicate or cut across any of these CCTs or their Economic Plans, rather it aims to provide linking activity and connections in relation to a shared tourism asset which can generate value to each of these communities, and others along the route.</li> </ul>
<p><b>North Devon Marketing Bureau</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A not-for-profit membership organisation formed by businesses from across the region to promote North Devon and Exmoor as a tourism destination, relevant to businesses from all sectors that benefit from the visitor economy.</li> <li>• The Marketing Bureau undertakes a range of activity throughout the year to promote the area across printed and digital channels (e.g. northdevon.com). There are opportunities to work closely with the Marketing Bureau to promote the Tarka Trail nationally and internationally.</li> </ul>
<p><b>South West Coast Path &amp; National Cycle Network</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are key initiatives with which the Tarka Trail must link. The Tarka Trail forms part of NCN27 which is the Devon ‘Coast to Coast’ route.</li> <li>• A significant part of the Tarka Trail coincides with the SCWP. A recent CCF-funded project has provided new information boards and signage at 62 locations across the South West, and has supported a range of events and marketing activity for the long distance path.</li> <li>• Future plans are to increase the year-round appeal of the SWCP, with benefits for businesses and residents, including encouraging longer visits in local areas, utilising new digital media to inform and enhance visits, and supporting businesses to access the walker economy, all of which will be of direct relevance to this Economic Plan.</li> <li>• The ‘Discovering England’s South West Coastal Path’ project will encourage tourists from the continent to visit and enjoy walking the Coastal Path, in particular focused on visitors from the Netherlands and Germany, and uses visitor itineraries featuring active historical and cultural breaks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rural Devon Multi-Use Trail Programme</b> (Devon County Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A long-term strategic plan to develop Devon’s network of rural multi-use trails (suitable for mixed cycling, walking, running etc.). The Tarka Trail is a key element of this network, with proposals to link with The Ruby Way (from Holsworthy to the Cornish border), The Granite Way (connecting Okehampton with Lydford) and Drakes Trail (through to Plymouth).</li> <li>• Work has started to complete some of the missing links in the Tarka Trail to provide continued off-road cycle access through to Ilfracombe.</li> </ul>

<p><b>The Recreational Route Network in Devon Strategy 2011</b> (Devon County Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets out different recreational routes for walking, cycling, and horse riding and classifies them based on certain criteria and the intended approach to management and promotion. There is an expectation of higher standards of way marking and maintenance for the strategic regional routes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Bio-Cultural Heritage Tourism (BCHT) project</b> (North Devon Biosphere Reserve)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proposed cross-channel partnership project which will bring together 4 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves on both sides of the Channel, including the North Devon Biosphere Reserve, to increase the value of tourism in these fragile areas whilst sustaining their environmental and cultural assets. The project seeks to deliver quality tourism experiences that do not degrade the health of natural and cultural sites.</li> <li>• Subject to funding, delivery will include packages of new visitor activities, a marketing and communication toolkit, the creation of a cross-channel network of tourism businesses, the development of an operator charter and quality assurance scheme linked to the Biosphere Reserve designation, and a visitor payback scheme. There are opportunities to link with this project across the range of planned activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DEFRA Marine and Terrestrial Pioneer Projects</b> (North Devon Biosphere Reserve)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEFRA is testing the methods to deliver a 25 year environment Strategy in a limited number of areas, with the Biosphere chosen as both a landscape and a marine pioneer. The pioneer project will work in support of the Biosphere strategy and bring innovative finance and methods to deliver growth in our natural environment, and the social and economic wellbeing of the area. The project runs for an initial period of 3-5 years.</li> </ul>
<p><b>North Devon Foodie Trail</b> (Devon &amp; Cornwall Rail Partnership)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new guide is being produced by the Devon &amp; Cornwall Rail Partnership to encourage trips along the 'Tarka Line' and to outlets offering local food which are accessible by public transport. The Tarka Line connects Barnstaple with Exeter and is noted for its scenic route. Plans are being brought forward to promote the Foodie Guide with a launch on a train using local producers, with the potential for more events in the future centred upon the annual North Devon FoodFest.</li> <li>• The Tarka Line connects with the Tarka Trail at Barnstaple and there are wider opportunities to link with the Rail Partnership to encourage visits to access the Tarka Trail from outside the area by rail.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meeth Quarry Nature Reserve</b> (Devon Wildlife Trust)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans to create a 'flagship' nature reserve and visitor experience in and around the former Meeth Quarry in the southern portion of the Tarka Trail. The clay works quarry was originally set up in 1920 with a worldwide export market, but ceased in 2004 and has since been undergoing a programme of restoration.</li> <li>• As well as wild zones based upon a unique natural and industrial landscape, planned facilities include wildlife watching, education space, walks and cycling trails, outward bound/Forest School, camping pods, and direct links to the Tarka Trail which passes through the reserve. The Nature Reserve will create new reasons to visit this area and to use the Tarka Trail.</li> </ul>

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. *About the Coastal Community Team*

This Plan has been produced by the Tarka Trail Coastal Community Team (CCT) to provide a joined-up strategy for the Tarka Trail to bring opportunities, new jobs and health benefits to coastal communities along the Trail. This document sits alongside Economic Plans produced by other CCTs in the northern Devon area as a complementary action plan for a strategic tourism and recreational asset that is unique to the area.

The CCT is an informal partnership led by North Devon Council, with representation drawn from key stakeholders with an interest in the development the Trail. We aim to have a balance of private, community and public sector voices.

Members of the team include representation from:

- Tarka Business (association of businesses with an interest in the Tarka Trail)
- Other private businesses (e.g. accommodation, food & drink, attractions, cycle hire sectors)
- Landowners (including Christie Estate, National Trust)
- Friends of the Tarka Trail
- North Devon Marketing Bureau
- North Devon Biosphere Reserve
- North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Exmoor National Park Authority
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- The Gaia Trust
- North Devon Council
- Torrington District Council
- Devon County Council
- Barnstaple CCT
- Bideford CCT
- Combe Martin CCT
- Fremington Quay CCT

- Ilfracombe CCT
- Lyn Valley CCT
- North Devon's Surfing Beaches CCT

### ***3.2. How our plan was developed***

Our plan has been developed through facilitated working meetings with members of the CCT and other key local stakeholders, drawing upon the evidence of available data, local strategies, reports and attendee knowledge and experiences to assess current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the development of Tarka Trail and its value to the coastal communities along its length. Through group discussion exercises, key priorities were agreed and relevant projects to deliver them were identified. Initial thinking and approach was then tested through wider discussions and consultation, including with the existing and new CCTs in the area to refine and add to our plan. Relevant partners and potential sources of funding have been identified for each project, including partners who will take a lead role in driving individual projects forward. We have also prioritised projects on the basis of importance and readiness for delivery, and split projects into short, medium and long term delivery.

This Economic Plan is a live document which will necessarily be updated over time to reflect new ideas and priorities in response to a changing environment. We welcome comments and new ideas.

## 4. Our Plan – aims & objectives

In the 19th century, the railway brought opportunities and jobs to isolated communities on the northern Devon coast; something that was only possible through careful planning, joined-up thinking and community co-operation. **Our vision** is for the former railway line and linked footpaths of the Tarka Trail to once again become a catalyst for growth and employment in northern Devon as a strategic and sustainable tourism and recreation asset for the benefit of coastal communities and the wider area.

**The aim of our Economic Plan** is to increase the economic and social value of the Tarka Trail to northern Devon's coastal communities.

Our key **objectives** are:

- To enhance the visitor experience and visitor facilities on the Tarka Trail.
- To raise awareness of the Trail as a unique tourism attraction with national and international appeal.
- To attract new visitors to the Trail, particularly from overseas and outside the main tourism season.
- To increase visitor spending within northern Devon coastal communities along the course of the Trail, leading to new business opportunities and jobs.
- To encourage residents' use of the Trail to improve health and quality of life.
- Where possible, to encourage alternatives to the car and relieve congestion, particularly for commuter journeys between Barnstaple, Bideford and Braunton, and to access the surfing beaches.
- To bring together coastal communities, Coastal Community Teams and private and public interests to develop the trail as a sustainable attraction for the benefit of the area.

## 5. Community needs and supporting data



Figure 5.1 The local authority areas

The coastal section of the Tarka Trail falls within the North Devon and Torridge district areas (see Fig. 5.1). Socio-economic data for the two districts underlines how distinct northern Devon is to the rest of the county.

- **There are a large number of businesses** - 6,215 active businesses (with at least one employee) in the northern Devon area (North Devon and Torridge combined)<sup>7</sup>. Together, North Devon and Torridge account for one fifth (20.0%) of the county's business stock.
- **But few are large employers** – only 0.6% of enterprise units in Torridge and 1.0% in North Devon have 100+ employees compared to a national average of 1.3%<sup>8</sup>.
- Consequently, **very small businesses predominate** - 76.9% of businesses in North Devon and 80.0% in Torridge have less than 5 employees, compared to an average of 76.7% in the county<sup>8</sup>.
- And **self-employment is very high** – in 2014, northern Devon had the highest proportions of working age residents in self-employment in the county (17.2% in North Devon and 18.7% in Torridge) and almost double the national average (9.7%)<sup>9</sup>.
- The **main sectors** for employment locally are *health/education services; food and accommodation services, retail/wholesale and agriculture*<sup>10</sup> - all **associated with low pay**. There is also a robust and diverse manufacturing sector.

<sup>7</sup> ONS Business Demography 2014

<sup>8</sup> UK Business: Activity, Size and Location 2016

<sup>9</sup> ONS Annual Population Survey Jul 2015 – Jun 2016

<sup>10</sup> Agriculture employment captured within Defra, *Agricultural and Horticultural Survey* and revealed as 9% of local employment

- There is a **particularly high dependence upon tourism**, which in 2015 was worth £547.8 million to the northern Devon economy. In North Devon, tourism supports 17% of the district's employment and 10% in Torrridge<sup>11</sup>.
- **Productivity has historically been low** – in 2010, calculated at only 53.8% of the UK average for GVA per capita in Torrridge<sup>12</sup> which was the lowest level in the county.
- **Incomes are low across the area**, reflecting the area's sector mix and low productivity levels – in 2016, average pay in Torrridge was the **third lowest in England** (67.0% of the national average) and in North Devon was only 73.1% of the national average<sup>13</sup>.
- **Higher skills levels (NVQ4+)** within the workforce, which are associated with higher levels of productivity, **are below the national average** – in 2015 only 25.5% of working age residents in North Devon and 32.1% in Torrridge held NVQ4+ qualifications, compared to a national average of 36.8%)<sup>14</sup>.
- **Northern Devon suffers from an exodus of young people** in search of Higher Education and career opportunities revealed by low proportions of residents aged 20-29 (in 2015 only 10.1% of residents in North Devon and 9.3% in Torrridge, compared to a national average of 13.5%)<sup>15</sup>. This trend is expected to continue.
- In 2010 Torrridge and North Devon were ranked **the most deprived and second most deprived districts in Devon**<sup>16</sup>. Both Ilfracombe and Barnstaple have communities (Lower Super Output Areas) in the most deprived 10% of areas nationally.

#### **In relation to the Tarka Trail economy:**

- Sustrans estimates that the value of cycle tourism in the UK is £635 million pa.<sup>17</sup>
- Cycling tourism is also a very important market in Europe – it is estimated that the EuroVelo cycle network (15 long distance trails) is worth over €7 billion as a cycle tourism product.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The South West Research Co. 2015

<sup>12</sup> Cambridge Econometrics *Local Economic Framework (LEFM) Model 2010*

<sup>13</sup> ONS *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016 (provisional results)*, based on place of work

<sup>14</sup> Proportion of working age residents, ONS *Annual Population Survey, Resident Based, - Jan 2015 - Dec 2015*

<sup>15</sup> National Statistics, *Mid-year Estimates 2015*

<sup>16</sup> *IMD 2010*

<sup>17</sup> Sustrans (1999) *Cycle tourism*, Information pack

<sup>18</sup> European Parliament (2012) *The European Cycle Network EuroVelo*

- Devon is recognised nationally as a prime location for walking and cycling breaks/holidays. Numerous cycle events take place across the county, attracting both competitors and supporters. In 2014, the Tour of Britain brought an additional £6 million spend into the county. In 2016 the Tour of Britain was watched by 250,000 people in Devon (an increase from 2014), and brought in £4.26m to Devon's economy.<sup>19</sup>
- The county has a number of branded multi-use off-road trails, including the Tarka Trail. As part of a Multi-Use Trails strategy, plans are to extend multi-use sections of the Tarka Trail through to Ilfracombe in the north and to Okehampton in the south.<sup>20</sup>
- The 32 mile Multi-Use Trail is used for 156,000 cycle trips annually, 73% of which are for leisure, and for an additional 71,000 leisure walking trips.<sup>21</sup>
- Approximately, 60% of users are from outside northern Devon, bringing in important tourism benefits (estimated at c. £20 million annually).<sup>22</sup>
- Across three Multi-Use Trails in Devon, including the Tarka Trail, usage increased by 14% between 2012 and 2014 and is expected to continue to do so.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Devon County Council

<sup>20</sup> DCC (2015) *Rural Devon Multi-Use Trail Programme*

<sup>21</sup> SQW(2015) *Devon Cycling and Walking Trails: Economic impact analysis for Devon County Council*

<sup>22</sup> DCC (2015) *Rural Devon Multi-Use Trail Programme*

<sup>23</sup> SQW(2015) *Devon Cycling and Walking Trails: Economic impact analysis for Devon County Council*

## 6. SWOT analysis of the Tarka Trail economy

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It brings tourists to the area</li> <li>▪ It is good for businesses</li> <li>▪ Great scenery for visitors – much of the route is within the North Devon AONB</li> <li>▪ High value natural bio-diversity – also within the North Devon Biosphere Reserve</li> <li>▪ Provides health and wellbeing benefits – for locals, visitors (walkers and cyclists)</li> <li>▪ Flat easy walking/cycling</li> <li>▪ Part of the South West Coast Path</li> <li>▪ Accessible by public transport links e.g. rail link at Barnstaple, connections to Exeter</li> <li>▪ Part of the National Cycle Network</li> <li>▪ There are a range of cycle hire operators</li> <li>▪ Use is free, leaving money to spend on local services</li> <li>▪ Cheap to maintain</li> <li>▪ Railway and other heritage features along the route</li> <li>▪ Disabled access</li> <li>▪ Audio interpretation posts along the Trail</li> <li>▪ Part of a great visitor offer – walking, cycling, dark skies, beaches and much more</li> <li>▪ Good local food outlets in key places; Instow, Fremington Quay, Chivenor, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Requires regular maintenance</li> <li>▪ Identity – is it a cycleway or a footpath or both? Which do you promote?</li> <li>▪ Lack of profile and marketing – brand, promoting facilities and businesses along the trail</li> <li>▪ Lack of signage to local businesses/attractions from the trail, especially in Barnstaple</li> <li>▪ No full guide for the whole trail</li> <li>▪ Lack of a single website with all relevant information</li> <li>▪ Crossing the R. Taw into Barnstaple is a problem i.e. the Long Bridge (unsafe for cyclists)</li> <li>▪ There is no link between cycle hire businesses</li> <li>▪ No facilities for storage of belongings</li> <li>▪ Lack of facilities e.g. shelters, refreshments at Bideford junctions</li> <li>▪ Parts are in poor condition e.g. Braunton-Woolacombe, Torrington to Meeth</li> <li>▪ Furniture &amp; infrastructure is old and in poor state of repair</li> <li>▪ Lack of a co-ordinated approach to initiatives</li> <li>▪ No common focus – stakeholders are not working together</li> <li>▪ Gives people the impression they can cycle the footpath sections</li> <li>▪ Lots of people come to ask how to access facilities from the Trail</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A dedicated website for the whole Trail (e.g. along the lines of the Two Moors Way)</li> <li>▪ Instagram/Facebook page</li> <li>▪ Social media/websites</li> <li>▪ Create a hashtag Tarka Trail (as in visitwestwardho)</li> <li>▪ Electric bikes offering a USP (not available on the Camel Trail)</li> <li>▪ Piggyback the www.northdevon.com website</li> <li>▪ Information boards at both entrances to each village with map of village and food businesses</li> <li>▪ A yearly food event similar to the Scrumptious Croyde Trail (entry fee to fund Tarka Trail Project)</li> <li>▪ Bideford Station developed as café and storage facilities</li> <li>▪ Improve water transport links i.e. Fremington to Appledore to Crow Point to Bideford to Instow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of linked up marketing</li> <li>▪ Separation of walkers and cyclists</li> <li>▪ Dogs</li> <li>▪ Loss of funding</li> <li>▪ Uncertainty in economic climate, impact on tourism</li> <li>▪ Dual identity – most people only know of cycle path and not that it is 180 miles long</li> <li>▪ Lack of focus at officer level – a small part of a lot of people’s jobs</li> </ul>

## 7. Our priorities

We have identified five key priorities that respond to our identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Tarka Trail:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>What we want to achieve</b>
<b>a. Research</b>	Available data on use of the Trail is historic, patchy and not always reliable. Little is known about how visitors and residents use the Trail or how the range of local tourism-related businesses benefits from it. A key priority therefore is to fill this knowledge gap to inform future developments and priorities, and to support future budget and funding proposals.	<i>Within six months:</i> (a) Survey of users; (b) Businesses benefiting from the Trail mapped and survey undertaken <i>Within five years:</i> (a) Regular programme of research and MI established
<b>b. Capital improvements</b>	To improve and maintain visitor facilities and infrastructure along the Trail and to address strategic gaps in the Trail routes. Some facilities and parts of the Trail are in poor condition. Maintaining and enhancing the core asset is essential to benefit the area into the future. Any new capital projects need to have clear responsibilities for maintenance to ensure that there is a sustainable legacy.	<i>Within six months:</i> (a) Initial phase of improved signage and mileage markers completed; (b) new iconic shelter created <i>Within five years:</i> (a) trail improvements implemented; (b) range of new facilities for cyclists; (c) plans for Trail advanced
<b>c. Marketing &amp; promotion</b>	Telling the world about the Tarka Trail and the visitor and recreational opportunities that it provides within a unique area of high quality landscape and biodiversity value. At the moment there is no co-ordinated promotion of the Trail as a sustainable visitor asset and resource. The potential of the Trail to generate new visits and jobs as a consequence is not therefore being fully realised. Existing information can be brought together, and the research at (a) used to target users.	<i>Within six months:</i> (a) dedicated website created; (b) social media activity commenced; (c) days out itineraries completed and publicised <i>Within five years:</i> (a) comprehensive guide to the Trail completed
<b>d. Benefitting the local economy</b>	The Tarka Trail is a free-to-use resource. Making links between the Trail and businesses within the local economy to ensure that the value of visits is maximised in terms of spending and associated employment is critical and is a core focus of this Economic Plan.	<i>Within six months:</i> (a) farm camping project implemented <i>Within five years:</i> (a) town & village information boards in place; (b) programme of events linked to the Trail promoted; (c) plans for 'Tour de Tarka' assessed
<b>e. Transport &amp; connectivity</b>	Providing new opportunities to access and enjoy the Trail from across the area through alternative transport options. There is currently no joined-up plan and there are opportunities to encourage wider car-free exploration	<i>Within six months:</i> (a) first electric bikes available, including for disabled users <i>Within five years:</i> (a) feasibility of new ferry links assessed; (b) strategic electric bike scheme scoped; (c) digital connectivity improved

## 8. Our plan

### 8.1. Research

Key project (title)	What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART	Lead & key partners	Estimated cost	Possible funding
<b>R1. Tarka Trail audit &amp; surveys</b>	Data and knowledge, a basis for more informed decision making	CCT, Friends of the Tarka Trail Group, DWT, Biosphere	£5,000	AONB, Sustrans
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Research programme to understand (a) how visitors (and residents) use the Tarka Trail together with associated spending patterns; and (b) how local businesses benefit from their proximity to the Trail and how the economic benefits could be increased. This project will be undertaken at a very early stage to help inform other activities and projects within this Economic Plan.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Partner time and resources, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Research plan - scoping/costing of surveys/audit; design and testing of surveys; mapping of businesses local to the Trail Implementation – <b>short term</b> (within 12 months), ongoing research schedule <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		

### 8.2. Capital improvements

Key project (title)	What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART	Lead & key partners	Estimated cost	Possible funding
<b>C1. Trail signage</b>	Increased and extended visits, increased local spend, increased employment	CCT, NDC, DCC	£10,000	RDPE, CCF, AONB, Leader5, partner businesses
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Improved signage to and from the Trail to encourage visitors to use the Trail and wider exploration of the area, including information and signposting to the Trail at Barnstaple Station. Potential to use symbols to highlight local facilities from the Trail.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Partner time, budget		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Survey of where signage, designs, permissions Implementation – mix of <b>short term</b> (within 12 months) and <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		

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<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>C2. Mileage markers</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased and extended visits, increased local spend, increased employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDC, DCC, Biosphere	<b>Estimated cost</b> £3,000	<b>Possible funding</b> RDPE, CCF, AONB, Leader5
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Creation and installation of mileage markers along the Trail to highlight progress and encourage further exploration.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Partner time, budget		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Survey of where markers should be positioned, designs, permissions Implementation – <b>short term</b> (within 12 months)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>C3. 'Wave' shelter</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Enhanced visitor facilities, a new attraction, increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> Gaia Trust, Biosphere Reserve, CCT	<b>Estimated cost</b> c.£8,000	<b>Possible funding</b> CCF, AONB, Leader5
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Create a memorable and iconic weather shelter for walkers and cyclists adjacent to the Trail between Yelland and Fremington on the site of the former 'boat shelter'. The shelter is to be of low impact sustainable design and construction in keeping with its location between the RSPB's Isley Marsh and the Gaia Trust's Home Farm Marsh nature reserves. May be included in the wider project at C7.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Management time, match funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Commissioned design and structural engineer certification Implementation – <b>short term</b> (within 12 months)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>C4. Facilities for cyclists</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDC, TDC, Sustrans,	<b>Estimated cost</b> £20,000	<b>Possible funding</b> CCF, AONB, Leader5, Sustrans, RDPE
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> There are currently few dedicated facilities for cyclists to address physical constraints to using the trail. This project will install lockers, racks and cycle storage at key points on the trail. New facilities will be promoted through marketing and promotional material.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Management time, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Identification of cyclist needs and appropriate sites Implementation – <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		

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<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>C5. Trail &amp; infrastructure improvements</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Safeguarded visitor experiences, expenditure and associated jobs	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> DCC, NDC, TDC, Sustrans, CCT	<b>Estimated cost</b> £20,000	<b>Possible funding</b> Sustrans, AONB, sponsorship
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Some surface sections of the Trail are deteriorating, requiring repairs to maintain the amenity value of the route. Historic infrastructure elements also need attention (e.g. tidying up the area by the entrance to the 'bat tunnel' between Bideford and Torrington).		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Management time, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Survey of the length of the Trail, sections prioritised for attention Implementation – range of actions, <b>short</b> (1-12 months e.g. tidying up the bat tunnel), <b>medium</b> (1-3 years) and <b>long term</b> (3 years +)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>C6. Closing 'gaps' in the Trail</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Extended cycle route, new visitor opportunities, increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> DCC, landowners, NDC, TDC, Sustrans, CCT	<b>Estimated cost</b> £100,000	<b>Possible funding</b> DCC
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> The Tarka Trail off-road cycle route runs from Braunton to Meeth (over 30 miles). Capital works are required to extend the off-road route to Ilfracombe in the north and to Hatherleigh in the south (adding an additional 8 miles to the route). Work has commenced at the northern end of the Trail to link Braunton through to Ilfracombe.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Management time, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Plans are part of the DCC Multi Use Trail Programme Implementation – <b>long term</b> (3 years +)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>C7. New shelters (other)</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Enhanced visitor facilities, a new attraction, increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> Landowners, NDC, DCC, CCT	<b>Estimated cost</b> £50,000	<b>Possible funding</b> CCF, Leader5, Sponsorship, RDPE
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Create a series of individually designed centres along the length of the trail as destinations in their own right. Position at key junctures along the trail, in proximity to significant points of interest. May include C3 as part of this project.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Management time, match funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Survey of sites along the Trail, commissioned design and structural survey work Implementation – <b>long term</b> (3 years +)		

Key project (title)	What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART	Lead & key partners	Estimated cost	Possible funding
<b>C8. Trail extensions to the surfing beaches</b>	Extended cycle routes, new visitor opportunities, increased visits, spend and associated employment	DCC, landowners, NDC, CCT, Surfing Beaches CCT	£100,000	Sustrans, CCF
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> The route of the Tarka Trail runs close to a number of northern Devon's surfing beaches (e.g. Saunton Sands, Croyde). Signed extensions from the Trail to the beaches will increase reasons to use the Trail as well as the sustainable means of accessing the beaches. Will create extensions to the existing safe cycle route where possible to encourage a modal shift in travel behaviour.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Management time, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Outline discussions with the DCC Multi Trail Programme and with land owners Implementation – <b>long term</b> (3 years +)		

### 8.3. Marketing & promotion

Key project (title)	What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART	Lead & key partners	Estimated cost	Possible funding
<b>M1. Tarka Trail website &amp; social media</b>	Increase visitor awareness, visits and repeat visits, spend and associated employment	CCT, NDMB, ENPA, NDC, DCC	£25,000	CCF, AONB, advertising, Awards for All, Visit England
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> The Tarka Trail has little profile and awareness nationally. Information is currently spread across a number of websites. This project will create a dedicated website for 'all things Tarka Trail' (along the lines of the recently launched 'Two Moors Way' website and the East Devon Way Ambassador Scheme) and as a mechanism to bring stakeholders together. Content to include definitive information about the cycle route and walking routes, information for users, facilities and businesses along the route with links, and linked social media engagement. Website could be stand alone or linked to the NDMB website.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Co-ordination time (to set up and maintain), funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Pull together project group, agree outline specification, obtain quotes Implementation – <b>short term</b> (1-12 months)		

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<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>M2. Annual tourism leaflet</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDMB, private sector	<b>Estimated cost</b> £1,000	<b>Possible funding</b> Advertising, AONB
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> A leaflet for the 2017 season to promote recreation and leisure opportunities along the Trail, including money-off vouchers within local attractions and businesses. Monitor take-up of the vouchers to assess effectiveness, review in time for the 2018 season, and include details of how the Trail can be accessed from Barnstaple station.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Co-ordination and engagement, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Develop outline format, engage with local businesses to attract interest Implementation – <b>short term</b> (1-12 months)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>M3. Itineraries for days out</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased interest, visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDMB, AONB, Biosphere	<b>Estimated cost</b> £1,000	<b>Possible funding</b> CCF, AONB, Visit England
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Develop a range of itineraries using the Tarka Trail for days out in the northern Devon area to raise awareness of car-free recreational and leisure possibilities locally. Promote through the website and the annual tourism leaflet, and use content to feed into other online information sources.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Co-ordination		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Bring together project team, update existing and research new routes Implementation – <b>short term</b> (1-12 months)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>M4. Hard copy guide to the Tarka Trail</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased interest, visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDMB, AONB, Biosphere Reserve	<b>Estimated cost</b> £2,000	<b>Possible funding</b> CCF, AONB, Sponsorship
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Develop a hard copy guide to the Tarka Trail, bringing together relevant information for visitors to complement the web-resources, building on existing resources.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Research and publication resources		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Bring together project team, update existing and research new routes Implementation – <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		

### 8.4. Benefiting the local economy

<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>E1. Town &amp; village information boards</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> New visitor opportunities, increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, other local CCTs and communities, NDC, local businesses	<b>Estimated cost</b> £10,000 (may be crossover with signage project)	<b>Possible funding</b> CCF, local businesses, AONB, Leader5
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Raise awareness of recreational opportunities and local businesses within communities along and just off the trail to encourage wider exploration and increased local expenditure. Design and install information and interpretation boards on the Trail at key entry points to towns and villages, including maps showing local attractions, food & drink businesses etc.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Partner time, resources, funding, community input		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Identify sites, design templates, engage with communities Implementation – <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>E2. Tarka camping</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> New visitor opportunities, increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, landowners	<b>Estimated cost</b> £500	<b>Possible funding</b> Landowners, Leader5
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Increase access to advice and guidance for farmers and landowners along the Tarka Trail in creating pop-up seasonal campsites (up to 28 days allowable). To include promotion of the sites to visitors.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Partner time and resources, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Review of regulations, identify farms, communication strategy Implementation – <b>short term</b> (within 12 months)		
<b>Key project (title)</b> <b>E3. Tarka events</b>	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDC, AONB, Biosphere	<b>Estimated cost</b> £1,000	<b>Possible funding</b> Sponsorship, entrance fees, AONB, Leader5
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Work with existing organisers and develop a programme of new events linked to the Trail to attract new visitors. Initiatives could include food events (e.g. along the lines of the Scrumptious Croyde Trail), sporting events (e.g. Strava Garmin events and challenges) with potential for entry fees to cross-fund other Tarka Trail projects.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Organiser time & co-ordination, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Form co-ordinating project team, action planning, engaging with existing events Implementation – <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		

<b>Key project (title)</b> E4. 'Tour de Tarka'	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, NDC, DCC, private sector	<b>Estimated cost</b> £1,000 plus sponsorship	<b>Possible funding</b> Sponsorship, entrance fees, Sustrans
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Develop high profile cycle competition to increase awareness of the Tarka Trail and attract new visitors to the area.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Organiser time & co-ordination, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Form co-ordinating project team, action planning Implementation – <b>medium term</b> (1-3 years)		

### 8.5. Transport & connectivity

<b>Key project (title)</b> T1. Electric bike scheme	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased market appeal, Increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> CCT, private operators, NDC, DCC	<b>Estimated cost</b> £40,000	<b>Possible funding</b> DoT, Co-Cars, Sustrans
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Increase interest in the Tarka Trail and attract new user markets by developing a pick-up-and-go electric bike scheme along the Tarka Trail with multiple pick-up and drop-off points (e.g. similarities to 'Boris Bikes')		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Organiser time & co-ordination, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Bring together cycle hire businesses locally, create project team, assess viability Implementation – <b>long term</b> (3 years +)		

<b>Key project (title)</b> T2. Ferry & river links	<b>What it will deliver (type of outcomes &amp; outputs) SMART</b> Increased market appeal, Increased visits, spend and associated employment	<b>Lead &amp; key partners</b> Ferry operator, CCT, private operators, NDC,	<b>Estimated cost</b> £50,000	<b>Possible funding</b> Leader5, CCF, RDPE
<b>Description &amp; rationale:</b> Establish new ferry routes linking Fremington, Appledore, Crow Point, Chivenor, Bideford and Instow to create new leisure options combining cycling/walking with ferry routes, and increasing both Trail and river activity. The total cost includes funding for a new boat.		<b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Organiser time & co-ordination, funding		
		<b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Bring together cycle hire businesses locally, create project team, assess viability Implementation – <b>long term</b> (3 years +)		

Key project (title) <b>T3. Improving digital connectivity</b>	What it will deliver (type of outcomes & outputs) SMART Increased visits, longer visits, increased spend and associated employment	Lead & key partners CCT, private operators, NDC, DCC	Estimated cost TBC (likely to be phased)	Possible funding Voucher scheme for businesses, RDPE, AONB, Leader5
<p><b>Description &amp; rationale:</b></p> <p>Mobile connectivity along the Trail is patchy at present which restricts visitor use of mobile technologies to inform their visit and activities. This project will increase access to digital communications along the Trail to increase visitor interest, attract new user markets, and encourage longer stays and wider exploration through access to real time visitor interpretation and information along the whole of the Trail. There is potential for mast connections for Wi-Fi/mobile 4G.</p>		<p><b>Resources required to deliver:</b> Organiser time &amp; co-ordination, funding</p> <p><b>Next steps &amp; dates:</b> Bring together interested parties including those involved in the Connecting Devon and Somerset project Implementation – <b>long term</b> (3 years +)</p>		

**Abbreviations**

AONB	North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CCF	Coastal Communities Fund
CCT	Coastal Community Team
DCC	Devon County Council
DoT	Dept of Transport
DWT	Devon Wildlife Trust
ENPA	Exmoor National Park Authority
NDC	North Devon Council
NDMB	North Devon Marketing Bureau
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
TDC	Torridge District Council

## 9. Barriers & risks to implementing our plan

Identified barriers/risks	Impact	Likelihood	Overall	How we will manage/overcome
(a) Not being able to secure external funding	Hi	Med	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop packages of initiatives that have greater critical mass and collective impact for funders</li> <li>- Prioritise and focus on the most important project initiatives</li> <li>- Pool resources to maximise value and capacity</li> <li>- Work with the private sector to share resources and maximise value</li> <li>- Ensure mutual benefits</li> </ul>
(b) Fragmentation	Med	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project covers several communities and parishes and will need strong governance to ensure mutual benefits are understood by all partners</li> <li>- Strategic Board to be set up with Project Teams responsible for individual projects</li> </ul>
(c) Obtaining planning permission where required in a sensitive environmental area	Hi	Med	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early engagement with planning authority to understand constraints</li> <li>- Develop ongoing working relationship at a strategic level</li> <li>- Appropriate developments and sensitive designs</li> </ul>
(d) Delay or non-delivery of key projects	Med	Med	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Board to influence and steer progress, to maintain focus on key projects</li> <li>- All projects to have individual 'owners' responsible for progress and reporting</li> </ul>