

An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape in Lynton, North Devon. The image shows a road on the left that curves into a circular loop. To the right of the road is a steep, rocky cliffside that meets the ocean. The water is a deep blue-green color, and white waves are crashing against the base of the cliff. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and human infrastructure.

A Place Story for Northern Devon

Our Place, Our Power

Lynton, North Devon

Photo Credit: RedZeppelin Aerial Photography

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Chapter 1: An Identity Forged by Coast, Land, and Community

Chapter 2: Custodians of Our Future

Chapter 3: Stewarding Our Legacy



*Clovelly Village, North Devon
Photo Credit: North Devon UNESCO Biosphere*

Foreword

Northern Devon has a clear story to tell - one of ambition, opportunity, and confidence in our future. This Place Story sets out who we are, what drives us, and why this region is ready for investment, partnership, and growth.

Northern Devon is a region of innovators, makers, problem-solvers, and determined communities. We are practical, resourceful, and forward-looking - and we are ready to build a future that matches our potential.

This document is designed to help government, investors, employers, partners and citizens understand what makes Northern Devon distinctive: our workforce, our natural assets, our emerging sectors, and our strong community values. It explains why this place matters and why now is the moment to engage with us.

Northern Devon is more than a great place to live or visit. It is a region with momentum. From clean maritime and renewable energy to advanced manufacturing, digital capability, agriculture, health innovation, and tourism. We are growing industries that matter to the UK's future.

We have created this Place Story to bring our ambitions into focus, align local voices, and make a compelling case for backing Northern Devon. It is a call to work with us, invest here, and be part of a place with huge potential and a clear vision for inclusive, sustainable growth.

Northern Devon is ready. Ready to collaborate. Ready to innovate. Ready to deliver.

We invite you to read this and see the future we see - and to join us in shaping it.



Katherine Allen

Member, Northern Devon Future's Board
Co-Chair, One Northern Devon



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Chair, Northern Devon Future's Board
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Introduction

The **Northern Devon Place Story** captures the region's unique identity, values, and ambitions in a single, cohesive narrative. It is designed to encourage meaningful conversations with stakeholders about how best to collaborate and achieve shared goals. The Place Story will be used to support advocacy, foster partnerships, and attract the right kind of investment. Above all, it enables us to present Northern Devon's story in our own words, demonstrating our ambition and commitment to securing a sustainable and prosperous future for our communities.

The story explores:

- 1 An Identity Forged by Coast, Land, and Community** – examining how our landscape, heritage, and people shape a distinctive place identity and values.
- 2 Custodians of Our Own Future** – outlining our intent to harness local strengths to build a sustainable and prosperous future.
- 3 Stewarding Our Legacy** – highlighting the importance of strong collaboration, from local networks to national partnerships, in delivering shared goals.

We hope that by developing this shared understanding of Northern Devon, we can align our partners' values and our own, strengthening our collective voice in advocating for locally driven, place-based innovation to help the people of Northern Devon thrive.



Tea by the Taw, Barnstaple
Photo Credit: North Devon UNESCO Biosphere

Chapter 1

An Identity Forged by Coast, Land and Community

In Northern Devon, place and identity are deeply entwined with landscape and lived experience. The region is well known for its majestic landscapes, miles of coastline, rolling farmland, moorland edges, and estuarine towns. But it is perhaps less well known for its stories, traditions, and communities that have evolved within it over centuries.

We see Northern Devon as a living landscape, by which we mean it is a dynamic, evolving space shaped by continuous interaction between people, nature, land and water. It reflects the layers of human activity, cultural memory, ecological processes, and local identity that have accumulated across generations.

This chapter invites us to see landscapes not just as a backdrop to human life, but as integral to it, shaped by history, alive with meaning, memory, and potential. Whether rural or urban, coastal or inland, our landscape, like our people, are always in flux, responding to the challenges and opportunities encountered.

Forged from the Past

Northern Devon's dramatic history is ever present in the day-to-day life of the region. From prehistoric hillforts like Clovelly Dykes to the Saxon Braunton Great Field and our network of bustling market towns, this landscape has long been a place of movement, exchange, and resilience. The coastline, acting as both a shield and a gateway, has exposed the region to the wider world, inviting opportunities, challenges, and vital connections.

Historical accounts speak of piracy and mercantile enterprise, reflecting a deep spirit of defiance and ingenuity. The wildness of the moors and cliffs, the isolation of rural communities, and the enduring rhythms of land and sea have fostered a people who are close-knit, resourceful, and proud.

Here, character is not just inherited but continually shaped by the forces of place: the stories embedded in the land, the challenges of geography, and the legacy of those who came before.

A landscape rich with history

- **Early Settlement and Trade:** Prehistoric hillslope enclosures and barrows mark our earliest settlers. Prehistoric, medieval and later trade routes still echo in modern paths like the Tarka Trail.
- **Maritime Life:** Coastal infrastructure, harbours, lighthouses, and lookouts tell stories of international and coastal trade, shipbuilding, and sometimes smuggling, with shipwrecks often found near the rugged coast of Lundy Island.
- **Industry and Agriculture:** The remains of clay pits, mines and quarries reveal the region's industrial past, while the patterns of field and hedgerow trace centuries of careful agricultural practice and land ownership.



Clovelly Dykes, Iron Age Hillfort

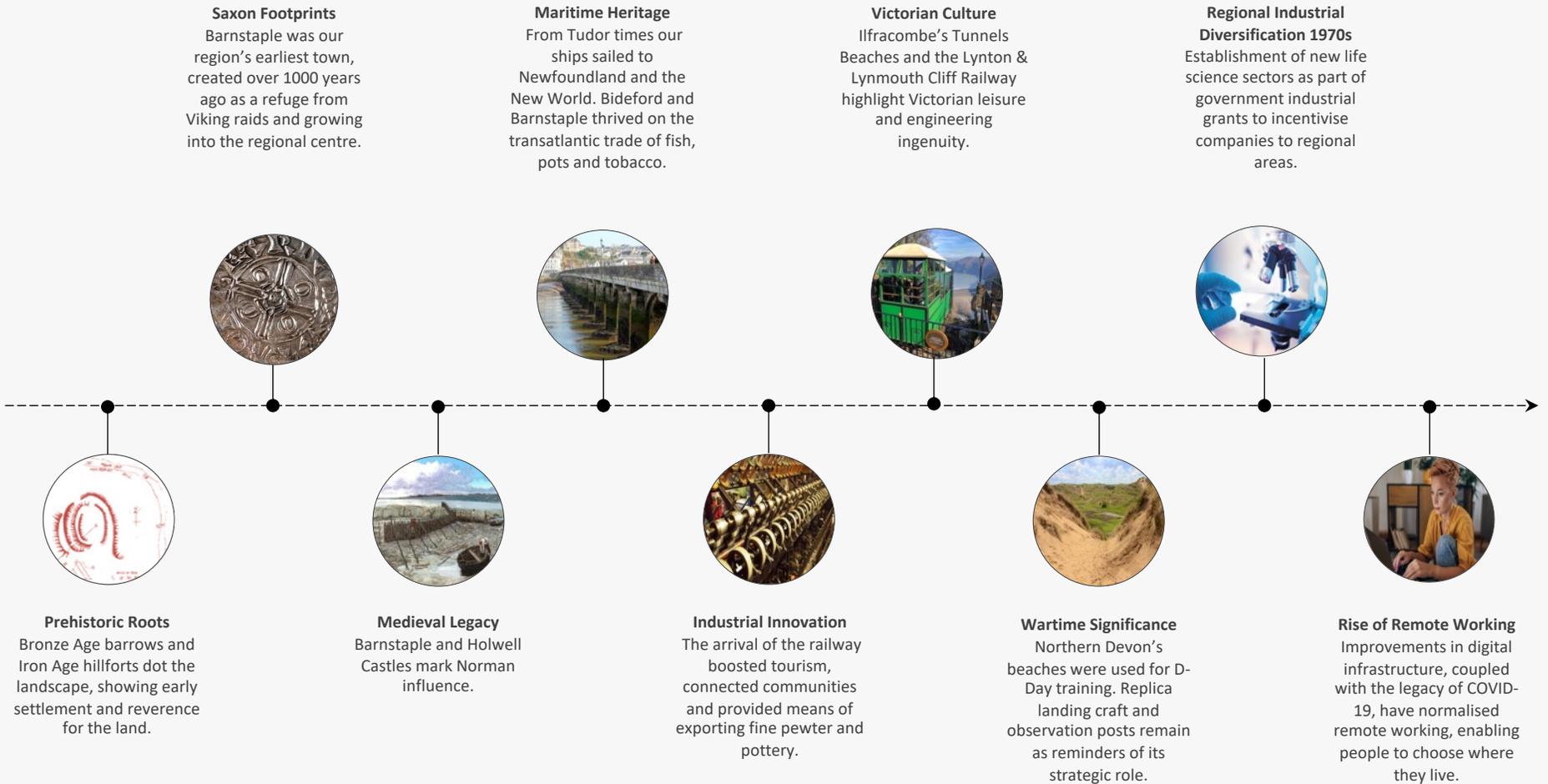


St Nicholas Chapel, Ilfracombe, 14th Century Chapel



19th Century Lime Kiln Heddon Mouth

Forged from the Past



Local Context



Lundy Island

Ilfracombe

A dramatic coastal town with Victorian charm and a thriving arts scene. Ilfracombe is known for its close community, rugged cliffs, harbour, and Damien Hirst's "Verity" statue.

South Molton

A gateway to Exmoor, South Molton is a friendly market town with a strong agricultural base. It's known for its pannier market, independent shops, and welcoming atmosphere.

Barnstaple

The key hub of Northern Devon with a strong civic and commercial centre. It has a recently regenerated market quarter and will soon boast new co-working and cultural spaces.

Bideford

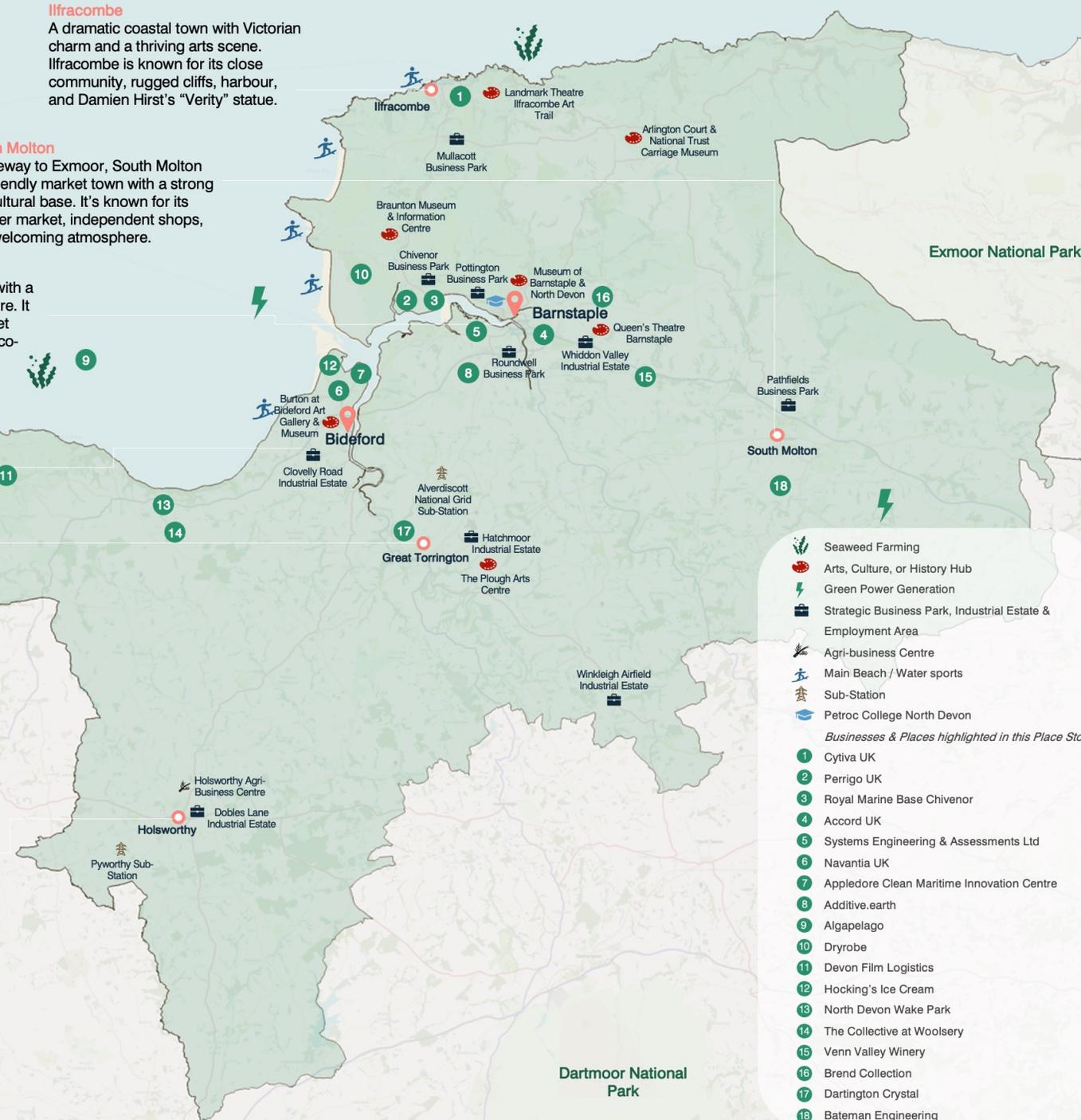
A historic riverside town known for its historic quay, narrow streets, upgraded market, and strong independent spirit. It is a gateway to the scenic Hartland Peninsula and has a rich history in trade and shipbuilding.

Great Torrington

A small market town with a proud heritage, Great Torrington is known for its role in the English Civil War and its vibrant arts scene. The Globe Hotel is undergoing transformation as a community-owned hotel and skills centre.

Holsworthy

A rural market town in Torrridge with a strong sense of community. Holsworthy is at the heart of the region's agricultural sector, with one of the busiest livestock markets in the SW and a close-knit community.



Businesses & Places highlighted in this Place Story

- 1 Cytiva UK
- 2 Perrigo UK
- 3 Royal Marine Base Chivenor
- 4 Accord UK
- 5 Systems Engineering & Assessments Ltd
- 6 Navantia UK
- 7 Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre
- 8 Additive.earth
- 9 Algapelago
- 10 Dryrobe
- 11 Devon Film Logistics
- 12 Hocking's Ice Cream
- 13 North Devon Wake Park
- 14 The Collective at Woolsery
- 15 Venn Valley Winery
- 16 Brend Collection
- 17 Dartington Crystal
- 18 Bateman Engineering

- Seaweed Farming
- Arts, Culture, or History Hub
- Green Power Generation
- Strategic Business Park, Industrial Estate & Employment Area
- Agri-business Centre
- Main Beach / Water sports
- Sub-Station
- Petroc College North Devon

World Class Environment

Northern Devon's natural assets are extraordinary, from the dramatic cliffs of Hartland to the sheltered coves of Hele Bay.

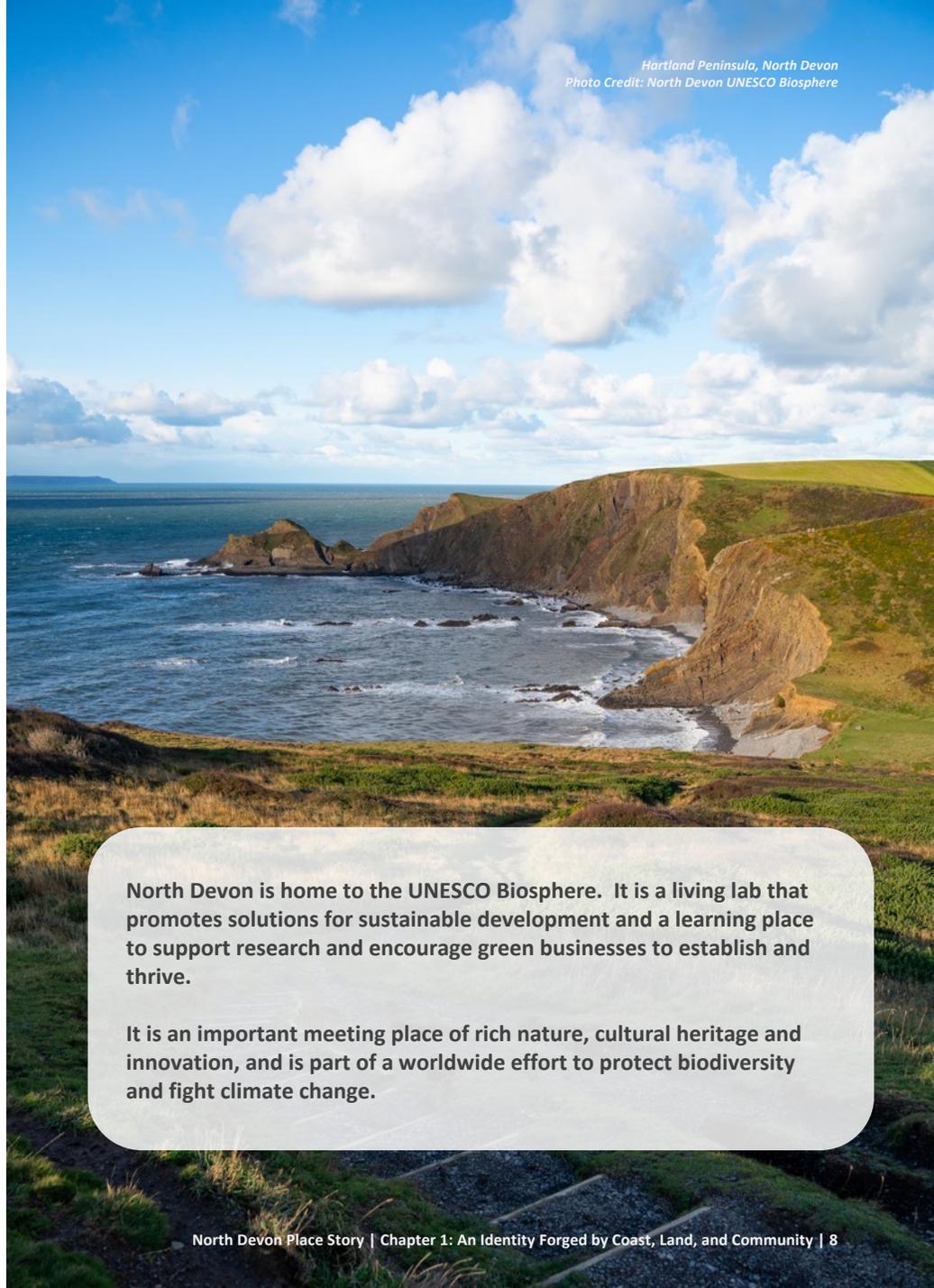
Stretching across 66 square miles, the coastline runs from the border of Exmoor National Park at Combe Martin, through the Taw-Torridge Estuary, and on to the Cornish border at Marsland Mouth.

This region offers an exceptional lifestyle: world-class surfing (now designated a World Surfing Reserve), extensive walking and cycling routes including the Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path, and hundreds of nature-based activities. These experiences connect people through a shared love of the outdoors, drawing millions of visitors and new residents seeking a high quality of life.

Historically, these landscapes enabled trade and production. Today, they underpin our ambition to lead in development of net-zero industries and provide a gateway to the Celtic Sea. What was once seen as a geographic constraint is now recognised as a source of inspiration and innovation.

The UK has committed to a clean energy future and innovation-led growth, and Northern Devon is ready to play its part at the gateway to the Celtic Sea.

Hartland Peninsula, North Devon
Photo Credit: North Devon UNESCO Biosphere



North Devon is home to the UNESCO Biosphere. It is a living lab that promotes solutions for sustainable development and a learning place to support research and encourage green businesses to establish and thrive.

It is an important meeting place of rich nature, cultural heritage and innovation, and is part of a worldwide effort to protect biodiversity and fight climate change.

Vibrant Towns and Villages

Northern Devon's market towns have long been the region's beating heart. Historically, they thrived as centres of commerce and craftsmanship, with the rivers Taw and Torridge linking Barnstaple and Bideford to global trade routes.

Today, these towns and villages remain vital hubs of enterprise, culture, and community. United by a spirit of independence and resilience, they host a growing network of local businesses, creative industries, and startups.

We value each town's distinct character and admire how together they form a powerful constellation that reflects Northern Devon's evolving identity.

Recent regeneration has seen investment of over £20m to:

- Establish the Barnstaple Market Quarter to strengthen the town's status as the heart of civic life.
- Bring the Grade II listed 'Globe Hotel' building back to life as a hotel and hospitality training centre, right in the heart of Great Torrington.
- Revitalise Bideford's historic Pannier Market to protect its heritage, making it a thriving space for year-round events and a dynamic food and drink scene.
- Modernise Holsworthy Manor Office with climate adaptation measures and new co-working space.



Bideford Eat Festival
Photo Credit: North Devon UNESCO Biosphere

People & Communities

The people in Northern Devon's communities each have their own story but are united by their proximity to nature, deep-rooted culture, and slower, more intentional way of life.

This unity shapes how families are raised, how work is approached, and how communities connect. While every story is unique, common narratives are frequently shared:

- **Rooted:** Generations who were born, bred, and invested here, crafting lives and creating opportunities within the region.
- **Chosen:** Those drawn by the area's beauty and lifestyle, whether seeking the thrill of surfing, the calm of retirement, or the space to create, innovate, and grow.
- **Return:** Those who ventured out for study or work, but ultimately come back to raise their families, seeking the quality of childhood they had enjoyed. Their return is a testament to the enduring pull of place.

The experiences of Northern Devon's communities are varied, and we know that identity is never singular or fixed, it is layered, evolving, and shaped by a plurality of voices and experiences.

Like everywhere, inequality exists. Access to opportunities varies greatly, shaped by personal circumstances and systemic barriers. A successful place is one that enables all people to live their best lives, right here in Northern Devon.

Our Shared Values



Independence: We value autonomy, resourcefulness, and a spirit of adventure. There's a strong tradition of doing things differently, guided by local knowledge, bold thinking, and a willingness to chart new paths.



Stewardship: We care deeply about the environment and the land. There's a strong focus on conservation and sustainable living.



Creativity: Creative thinking and making are part of everyday life, often influenced by the local landscape and cultural heritage.



Belonging: We feel connected to the area, whether we've lived here all our lives, moved here by choice, or returned after time away.



Intentionality: Life is lived at a considered pace. We value meaningful relationships and experiences.

People & Communities

Northern Devon's communities have a strong and well-established culture of service. The public, voluntary, community, and social enterprise sectors play a crucial role in supporting wellbeing, inclusion, and local resilience.

Around 23% of residents work in public service roles, such as education, healthcare, social care, and local government. These organisations are closely connected to local needs, helping to deliver practical and effective outcomes.

The third sector in Northern Devon is broad and active, ranging from food banks and mental health support to arts programmes, youth services, and environmental initiatives. Volunteering rates in the area are higher than the national average, reflecting a strong commitment to community involvement.

Against the backdrop of the UK's ageing society, older residents in Northern Devon are often seen as a sign of limited economic growth. However, their contribution is significant. Retired people provide essential support to local communities, offering time, experience, and care. They are a vital part of the region's social fabric.

Many of these groups operate at a very local level. They are trusted, responsive, and well-informed about the challenges facing their communities - from rural isolation to climate resilience. These organisations act as connectors, problem-solvers, and community builders, helping Northern Devon thrive.

Examples of Some of Our Exemplar Charities



North Devon Hospice provides compassionate care and support for people across North Devon affected by life-limiting illnesses.



North Devon and Torridge Voluntary Services empowers and connects the voluntary sector across North Devon and Torridge, providing guidance, training, and advocacy to help local organisations thrive.



Earth Action North Devon is a local charity protecting and improving our environment through community action, inspiring reconnection with nature and driving sustainable change.



The Pickwell Foundation is a North Devon-based charity supporting climate action and displaced people through grants, partnerships, and local initiatives like refugee resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine programme.



Sunrise Diversity is a charity promoting inclusion and equality across North Devon, offering activities, events, and training that help create safe, welcoming communities for all.

Cultural Life

Culture is a vital thread in Northern Devon’s identity. It celebrates heritage, amplifies diverse voices, and brings communities together. Investment in cultural activities from festivals to sport sparks vibrancy, curiosity, and connection in daily life.

Festivals honour our rich heritage and creativity, from the Clovelly Maritime Festival and Pilton Green Man to Oceanfest in Croyde and the Soap Box Derby in Bideford. Theatre thrives through Barnstaple’s Theatrefest and year-round performances at the Plough Arts, Queens, and Landmark Theatres, feature everything from celebrity comedians to international dance.

Art inspired by our landscapes is showcased in galleries from Appledore to Ilfracombe, including the Burton at Bideford and the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon. Renowned graffiti artist Mau Mau also leaves his mark in unexpected places.

Literature rooted in the region includes works by Henry Williamson (Tarka the Otter) who famously described the area as *‘the land of two rivers’*, evocatively referring to the power of the River Taw and Torridge. Others of note being R.D. Blackmore (Lorna Doone), Charles Kingsley (Westward Ho!), and Ted Hughes (Moortown Diary). Today, the Appledore Book Festival celebrates both emerging and established authors.

Sport blends tradition with coastal adventure. Gig rowing thrives in Appledore, Clovelly, and Barnstaple, sailing is a much-loved activity along the estuaries, and surfing at Croyde and Westward Ho! attracts national competitions. Local rugby, football, and hockey clubs foster wellbeing and inclusion.

Agriculture shows are held seasonally across North Devon, creating business opportunities while celebrating agriculture and rural life, strengthening community connections, and reinforcing links between modern farming and the area’s agricultural heritage.



Enterprising Spirit

Northern Devon is known for its independence and enterprise — home to a vibrant and diverse small business community shaped by the region’s relative isolation. In a place where traditional industries once dominated, local innovators have carved out new paths, building businesses that are agile, creative, and deeply connected to their surroundings.

We value self-reliance, innovation, and the courage to do things differently. Our people are makers, doers, and thinkers who forge their own paths.

From artisan producers and tech startups to social enterprises and creative studios, these businesses draw inspiration from the landscape and cultural heritage around them. The coastlines, moorlands, and market towns are not just backdrops, they are catalysts for innovation and sustainable enterprise.

Local networks and hubs such as North Devon + and NODE co-working spaces help these businesses thrive, offering collaboration, mentorship, and access to new markets. They are vital enablers of economic growth to help people and businesses flourish and prosper.

Founded in Northern Devon



Established in 1967, Dartington Crystal was originally conceived as a social enterprise to support the economic prosperity of the area. They brought workers from Scandinavia to share their trade and upskill local workers, it continues to thrive to this day.



Inovara are helping businesses demystify AI and turning raw data into actionable insights, streamlining operations, and equipping teams with the skills to use advanced AI tools with confidence.



Founded in rural North Devon 50 years ago, Bateman Engineering design and manufacture self-propelled crop sprayers, using innovative engineering to create high-performance, user-friendly agricultural equipment.



Algapelago builds scalable 'seaweed forests' in offshore waters to grow, harvest and process kelp into sustainable products. They work to regenerate marine ecosystems and develop seaweed-based solutions to replace carbon-intensive farming inputs.



Dryrobe is globally recognised outdoor apparel brand producing weatherproof changing robes designed for a wide range of outdoor uses from wild beaches to movie sets.

Enterprising Spirit

Across the visitor and leisure economy in Northern Devon, a vibrant entrepreneurial spirit is flourishing, especially among young people who are forging bold new paths. From food trucks testing business concepts to sustainable clothing brands and nature-based activities, these ventures are reshaping what it means to visit, explore, and connect us.

There is a thriving food and drink industry with agriculture and hospitality forming the backbone of the local economy. The region's outstanding natural assets support the production of high-quality meats, dairy, grains, and artisanal goods.

At the heart of this movement is a deep commitment to sustainability. These businesses often prioritise low-impact operations, ethical sourcing, and regenerative practices that align with the values of today's ethically conscious travellers. But the benefits go beyond the environmental.

Crucially, this spirit is helping to shape a higher-value visitor economy, one built around experiences like wakeboarding, cookery classes, fine dining, wild foraging, and immersive gaming. These activities enrich the visitor experience and support local talent and enterprise.

Many of these ventures operate year-round, giving people opportunities to experience nature tourism in all seasons, and helping to smooth out the peaks and troughs of seasonal tourism. This enables the creation of more stable livelihoods and a resilient leisure economy that benefits communities as much as visitors.

Longer stays, deeper engagement, and more meaningful spend is more than a trend, it's a quiet revolution in how we experience destinations, led by a fearless new generation leveraging business as a tool for connection, creativity and change.

Founded in Northern Devon



Brend Hotel Collection: Founded in Barnstaple, this family-run collection of luxury hotels, restaurants, and spas has grown across Devon and Cornwall, earning a reputation for exceptional service, elegant settings, and a strong local identity.



Hocking's Ice Cream: Rooted in Northern Devon's heritage, Hocking's embodies local enterprise and tradition, supporting year-round tourism and community resilience.



The Collective at Woolsery: A village-scale hospitality project in North Devon, offering farm-to-table dining, boutique accommodation, a village shop & post office, gourmet eatery, and sustainable farming.



Wake Park North Devon: A leisure destination that supports active tourism and community engagement, contributing to Northern Devon's year-round appeal.



Venn Valley: A vineyard producing award-winning wine, tours, shops, dining. It's one of very few vineyards in North Devon and part of an emerging UK wine industry.

Chapter 2

Custodians of Our Own Future

We are shaped by a legacy of piracy and enterprise, where bold acts of survival and ambition were not just tolerated, but celebrated. This history has left its mark: Northern Devon is a place of mavericks, of people who do not follow paths laid by others but forge their own instead. It's a spirit that still runs deep in our communities today.

But we know we must protect what shaped us. We must be custodians of the land and sea, by which we mean to take on a deep responsibility, not just to use the land, but to care for it, protect it, and ensure its vitality for future generations. It's about stewardship, not ownership.

This chapter explores our ambition for the future — how we are building on our strengths in clean maritime, green energy, high-value manufacturing, agricultural and defence technologies, and the creative industries. By doing so, we are creating new opportunities for the youngest members of our communities and shaping a place where everyone can thrive and build the kind of lives they want, here in Northern Devon.

Strength-Based Enterprise

Why us, why now?

We have set out in this Place Story the values that unite us: a deep appreciation of our heritage, the importance of community, and the need to protect our landscapes. We believe these values, coupled with our natural assets, perfectly position us to as changemakers, ready to support the UK in its ambitions for growth.

We may cherish our past, but we are also embracing our future. We know that by being part of the UK's modernisation, we can enhance the opportunities for young people in Northern Devon, giving them a choice of careers that not only afford a good quality of life, but fulfil the need to be part of something positive and progressive.

The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy offers a valuable framework for articulating our opportunities. It is closely aligned with our Economic Strategy, demonstrating that we are already on the right path and focusing policy and investment on the right sectors.

We embrace modern industries and sustainable growth. From green tech to creative enterprise, we are building an economy that reflects our values and respects our environment.

Drivers for Change

Reliance on Part-Time and Seasonal Work

Northern Devon depends heavily on part-time and seasonal jobs, especially in tourism and agriculture. Much of its GDP is generated in summer, creating sharp economic peaks. This instability drives young people away in search of full-time, skilled work and makes it harder to attract new talent, shrinking the working-age population and increasing old-age dependency.

Low Productivity and Competitiveness

The region lags behind Devon and national averages, relying on low-GVA industries. This limits long-term prosperity, deterring inward investment and the creation of high-quality jobs.

Limited Job Diversity

Dominance of low-wage sectors like agriculture and tourism leaves the economy vulnerable. External shocks such as COVID-19 and Brexit have also triggered sudden disruptions, threatening livelihoods and regional stability.

Generational Barriers

Entrenched deprivation, low social mobility, and in-work poverty persist. Health inequalities are stark, with a 15-year life expectancy gap between Ilfracombe and Exmouth. Expanding economic opportunity is vital to improving quality of life.

Strength-Based Enterprise

Maritime, Clean Energy & Advanced Manufacturing



What is the national ambition?

- Deliver cheaper, cleaner energy through investment in offshore wind, hydrogen, and carbon capture.
- Make the UK a global leader in zero-emission flight, autonomous vehicles, and high-tech production.

Why look to Northern Devon?

Maritime, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing are strategically connected in Northern Devon. Our Clean Maritime and Growth Vision sets out a bold yet credible ambition: to become a world-class hub for integrated clean maritime activity - driving a resilient blue-green economy and advancing Net Zero goals.

The region offers key national assets: access to the Celtic Sea for floating offshore wind, strong potential for green hydrogen, aquaculture, and biofertiliser, plus suitable sites for solar and maritime innovation. Grid connections at Alverdiscott and Pyworthy enable over 5GW of green energy transmission.

Our Green Hydrogen Route Map is attracting investment by raising awareness among stakeholders and supporting infrastructure development through a robust planning framework.

We are building an active innovation ecosystem with partners including Exeter and Plymouth universities, leading businesses, government bodies, and The Crown Estate, aligning expertise and ambition to drive economic growth.

The Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre will position Northern Devon as a UK leader in clean maritime R&D. It will support the development and testing of technologies such as:

- Tidal energy converters
- Electric propulsion
- Smart environmental monitoring
- Advanced O&M systems
- Maritime cybersecurity
- Aquaculture
- Autonomous vessels

The aim is to foster skills development, create high-value jobs, and offer R&D space for new and established businesses.

Strength-Based Enterprise

Life Sciences



What is the national ambition?

Position the UK as Europe's top life sciences hub with faster NHS adoption and biotech investment.

Why look to Northern Devon?

Northern Devon is fast becoming a hub for life sciences - built on the foundations of established pharmaceutical companies and strengthened by innovation in agriculture and ecosystem services.

Building on decades of industrial foresight, the region now supports a diverse mix of companies from global pharmaceutical firms to pioneering startups working at the intersection of health, sustainability, and bioscience.

This evolving cluster reflects North Devon's unique capacity to blend scientific excellence with natural assets, driving solutions for both human and environmental wellbeing.

Case Study

North Devon is home to a thriving pharmaceutical cluster, rooted in a strategic decision from the 1970s to encourage a more balanced regional distribution of industry across the UK. This foresight led to the establishment of a number of key pharmaceutical companies in the area, which today collectively employ over 2000 people.



Strength-Based Enterprise

Defence



What is the national ambition?

Strengthen UK defence capabilities and exports, with faster procurement and increased spending.

Why look to Northern Devon?

Northern Devon has long had a history of defence. From 1940 there was an RAF base at Chivenor, and it was a Coastal Command station during the Second World War. It became a Marine Base in 1995 and continues to work closely with the marine testing facility in Instow.

Given our long history of defence infrastructure, Northern Devon has a strong marine identity, well-established supply chains ready to scale up, an emerging technology sector, and strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Defence and hubs such as Plymouth.

Case Study

SEA based in Barnstaple, North Devon, designs and delivers advanced defence systems for naval and military operations.

They specialise in the development and manufacture of cutting-edge technologies, including communication systems, anti-submarine warfare and countermeasure solutions, and torpedo and decoy launchers. These innovations support armed forces in the UK and around the world.



Navantia is a global leader in naval shipbuilding and maritime technology, specialising in the design, construction, and integration of military and civilian vessels, as well as advanced ship systems and green energy solutions. By acquiring Harland & Wolff's sites, including Appledore, Navantia is expanding its footprint in the UK, combining cutting-edge innovation with British shipbuilding heritage to deliver world-class naval, offshore, and energy infrastructure projects.

Strength-Based Enterprise

Creative Industries



What is the national ambition?

Boost regional creative clusters and global exports in film, music, gaming, and advertising.

Why look to Northern Devon?

Creativity is thriving in Northern Devon and is recognised as one of our priority sectors. We're actively shaping the creative economy, securing millions of pounds of investment to develop hubs in our towns, repurpose vacant spaces into studios, and establish co-working hubs for creative professionals. Northern Devon is home to seven Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations - a clear indicator of cultural strength and the national value placed on our work.

Our Cultural Partnership Network connects local creatives, councils, universities, and national bodies to drive shared strategic aims. By improving digital connectivity, we are opening new opportunities, including the growth of game development as part of our future creative industries. The lifestyle Northern Devon offers continues to attract a new generation of creative talent, providing them with inspiration to innovate and spaces to create.

Case Study

Devon Film Logistics specialises in location management and production support for film, television, and photography across the South West. They provide end-to-end logistics, from scouting and permits to equipment, vehicles, and on-site coordination, ensuring smooth, efficient shoots in some of the UK's most striking locations. They employ a range of skilled people from boat operators to catering crews.



Strength-Based Enterprise

Digital and Technology



What is the national ambition?

Lead in AI, quantum, semiconductors, and cybersecurity through major R&D investment.

Why look to Northern Devon?

We have strong foundations in pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and engineering, alongside a growing agri-tech sector. These industries are driving regional demand for advanced data analytics, cybersecurity, and AI-powered systems for monitoring, optimisation, and safety.

Our coastal location and the scale of clean energy produced across the region position Northern Devon as an ideal hub for innovation, from AI systems to advanced manufacturing, harnessing the opportunities of decarbonisation. Over the next decade, the maritime and defence sectors will also depend on advanced environmental intelligence, from operations and maintenance to protecting critical infrastructure such as data and energy cables.

Case Study

Additive.earth are making significant impact, from improving global river health through advanced monitoring systems to pioneering sustainable ocean farming. New investment from Capgemini will help Additive.earth to scale, enhancing their contributions to ecological health, biodiversity, and community well-being challenges.



Young People's Success

We are lucky to have an abundance of natural assets and a community with an enterprising spirit. But we know that our successes rely on building a bright future for our young people.

Northern Devon's young people deserve more than just jobs; they deserve futures that honour the land that shaped them. From early education in village schools to specialist training in towns, we're building a system that connects learning with place, purpose, and pride.

We want our next generation to forge bold paths, just like their ancestors, into careers that reflect their deep connection to the landscape. We are seeking to create jobs beyond seasonal work that fades with summer, delivering long-term opportunities in sectors that matter. This will afford young people long, fulfilling careers across industries such as marine, clean energy, and digital innovation.

A merger between Petroc and Exeter College is unlocking new possibilities, aligning education with the region's values and economic strengths. With technical training, apprenticeships, and stronger links to employers, we're creating a pipeline into high-value industries, rooted in STEM, powered by AI, and driven by local ambition.

We have a vision to provide education and skills training that is accessible, inclusive and deeply connected to the landscape, guiding young people into futures they understand, believe in, and will help shape.

We know what it takes to secure a successful future for young people in Northern Devon. Beyond education we need secure housing and reliable transport systems. These priorities are not just aspirations; they are embedded in the work we are already delivering to ensure Northern Devon is a place where young people can thrive, build their lives, and shape the region's future.

We want to ensure our region offers opportunities for young people to thrive, so no one feels they need to leave to realise their potential.



Ensure there are the right homes in the right places

Like many areas, Northern Devon faces housing challenges. We're committed to delivering sustainable homes that enable young people to live independently — raising living standards and attracting talent.



Diversifying Jobs

We are growing high-value sectors to reduce reliance on low-productivity industries. This shift is raising pay, creating better opportunities, and helping people build their futures in Northern Devon.



Continue to improve digital infrastructure

We are investing in broadband coverage and speed to meet the demands of modern life. High-quality digital connectivity is essential for business, employment, education, and healthcare.



Connect Northern Devon to other regions

We are developing transport links that connect residential areas to key business hubs and employment opportunities in neighbouring towns and cities such as Exeter and Plymouth.

Chapter 3

Stewarding Our Legacy

Northern Devon is stepping into its future with confidence and clarity. Our leadership is collaborative, our partnerships are resilient, and our ambition is shared across sectors and communities. This section explores the evolving governance landscape, the strength of our partnerships, and our strategic plan for delivery.

We believe that effective decision-making is essential to unlocking the growth opportunities we have identified. By working together, grounded in place, powered by people, and united by shared values of collaboration we are shaping a future that reflects who we are and what we stand for.

This chapter looks at emerging changes in the local government landscape, the outcomes we want to achieve, and the strong partnerships that will be key to our future success.

Stewarding Our Legacy

Local government reorganisation marks a major shift in governance, and Devon is part of this change. While the final structure is still being negotiated, one thing is clear: Torridge and North Devon share a strong identity, ambition, and vision. Together, they form Northern Devon, a region united in purpose.

Governance here is layered and rooted in community. From parish and town councils to district and county partnerships, these structures reflect local priorities and drive effective action. As reorganisation progresses, we're committed to collaboration across all levels, leveraging strengths and supporting one another.

We're already working with the district network and the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) to ensure reorganisation enhances our ability to serve communities. This means protecting cultural identity, tackling long-standing challenges, and unlocking new opportunities through joined-up investment.

For communities and parishes, we'll continue to champion local voices and preserve the distinct character of our towns and villages. For district councils, we're focused on strengthening local and strategic action. For the Combined Authority, Northern Devon offers a united front, a clear sense of place, and a readiness to contribute to Devon's wider vision. And for central government, we represent a region already delivering on national priorities, ready to scale impact with the right support.

What outcomes do we want for Northern Devon?

A clear regional identity

Northern Devon is recognised as a distinct and unified region within Devon, with its cultural heritage, community values, and economic potential fully acknowledged and celebrated.

Streamlined but responsive governance

We want a governance structure that is efficient yet firmly grounded in local insight, from parish and town councils to district collaboration, and works seamlessly with county and national systems.

Locally informed decision-making

National and regional bodies must actively engage with Northern Devon's lived realities, understanding urban-rural disparities and ensuring that policies reflect our local priorities, challenges, and ambitions.

Improved resource allocation and investment targeting

We seek a system that allows for strategic and equitable distribution of resources, ensuring funding is directed where it can have the greatest local impact.

Enhanced service delivery and innovation

Public services should be more responsive and tailored to local needs, with governance structures that support innovation and continuous improvement.

Stronger civic engagement and trust

We aim to build governance that fosters public participation, strengthens trust in local institutions, and encourages active citizenship.

Stewarding Our Legacy

Strategic Partnerships with Shared Values and Goals

Strategic partnerships are fundamental to delivering the outcomes set out in our Place Story. We have a clear plan for Northern Devon’s future, but we know it will be stronger if delivered in partnership. Our track record shows we work well with others, building trust and momentum across sectors and communities. As we move forward, we’re committed to being targeted and strategic in how we collaborate, maximising impact for our communities, enabling inclusive growth, and supporting a just governance transition.

Northern Devon Futures is a collaborative initiative uniting councils, health services, educators, businesses, and communities to shape a long-term vision for the region. Its goal is a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable Northern Devon by 2050.

The Partnership operates through six action groups: Economy, Innovation and Skills; Health and Equity; Climate; Community Wellbeing and Inclusion; Housing and Infrastructure; Children and Young People.

The **Torrige Place Board** is a strategic leadership group formed to guide the delivery of the Levelling Up Partnership in Torrige. It brings together local leaders from government, business, education, health, and the voluntary sector to shape investment priorities and ensure projects are aligned with community needs.

The Board focuses on unlocking long-term benefits in areas like clean growth, housing, skills, and infrastructure, and plays a key role in coordinating with central government to maximise impact for Torrige and Northern Devon.

The Devon and Torbay Business Advisory Group is a strategic body supporting the CCA in shaping and delivering its economic vision. Acting as the voice of business, it brings together experts from micro to large business, social enterprises, and key sectors like tourism, tech, and manufacturing.

The group advises on strategy, sets annual priorities, secures investment, and designs programmes to meet local business needs. By providing insight and evidence from the business community, it ensures economic planning reflects real-world experience and aligns with regional growth goals.

The Crown Estate is a strong strategic partner for Northern Devon, given its focus on accelerating renewable technologies such as offshore wind, tidal and hydrogen power, whilst ensuring the benefits flow to local communities. For Northern Devon, this means potential investment in infrastructure, skills, and supply chains that support long-term prosperity and environmental stewardship.

One Ilfracombe is a strategic body for one of the most deprived towns in Devon, bringing together all sectors, public services, and governance layers to effect a change – ‘turning the dial’ for those living and working in the town.



To Conclude: Defining a Distinctive Future

Northern Devon stands at a pivotal moment, rooted in a rich heritage, yet confidently shaping its own future. The region's identity, forged by coast, land, and community, is not only a source of pride but a foundation for innovation and resilience. Through collaboration, creativity, and a deep sense of stewardship, Northern Devon is charting a course that balances growth with care for people and place.

The journey ahead is defined by partnership and purpose. By uniting local voices, investing in skills and enterprise, and embracing innovation, Northern Devon is poised to become a beacon for inclusive prosperity and cultural vitality, not just for the South West, but for the whole of the UK.

Our ambition is bold: to become a cultural and economic powerhouse not only for Devon and the South West, but for the wider UK. We are defining our own future, through place, purpose, and partnership.

This is more than a story: it is an invitation. An invitation to join in building a future that honours the past, empowers communities, and sets a bold example of what can be achieved when place, purpose, and partnership come together.