

Agenda item 5: A Greener way for the bay framework and action plan

Averting a potentially catastrophic regional planning crisis

Dear Councillors,

'Seven Concerned Citizens' are aware that your board is being presented with a report on an update on the Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan (GWFOB FAP), **for review and recommendations** to the Place Leadership Board seeking to endorse this plan in September.

In relation to this we draw to your attention significant strategic overview and scrutiny concerns pertaining to:

- (1) the GWFOB FAP proposals
- (2) the public consultation findings
- (3) the presented board report

A. SUMMARY OF OUR CONCERNS

Firstly, we highly commend the courage and initiative of Torbay Council Officers to engage with, invite and include 'dissenting' perspectives into the public consultation process. As a group who hold dissent opinions, we acknowledge the challenges and aim to offer positive, pragmatic and valuable contribution.

1. GWFOB FAP proposals: In January 2024 *'Seven Concerned Citizens'* were invited to review and comment on the GWFOB FAP proposals. We compiled a 25 page report accompanied by a 13 minute explanatory video which articulates seven significant concerns regarding the proposals. These can be found on our website on the 'consult' page.

www.sevenconcernedcitizens.co.uk/consult

Our conclusions found that the proposals are **fundamentally flawed and strategically unsound**. We highlighted serious flaws in the strategic planning and value management approaches as well as institutional bias, advisory gaps and misleading propaganda. Left untreated these issues pose significant threats of harm to the interests of citizens of this region from flawed strategy development, advisory & governance failures and unexamined consequences.

To be clear: There appears to be a complete tier of strategic process, formulation and rigour absent within and informing the proposals. Such a tier would typically be found in modern strategic management practices associated with complex S.T.E.M. (Science, Technical, Engineering & Mathematics) organisations where contrasting / conflicting world or technical views can be included and incorporated positively to create balanced & integrated strategy and outcomes.

This is not the case in regard to the GWFOB FAP and if left unchecked the implications and unintended consequences are far reaching and potentially catastrophic.

2. Public consultation findings: The public consultation reports 18% (109 respondents) undertaking the ‘disagree survey’ noting that other negative responses were present in the ‘agree surveys’.

This percentage may be a **highly significant indicator** of a rapidly emerging trend approaching a ‘systemic tipping point’ as more concerned citizens are perhaps scrutinising the net zero policies and outcomes. People may be becoming increasingly aware of the resulting adverse impacts, hardships and potentially underlying / obscured social re-construction agendas, whilst questioning the benefits and validity of such policies and plans.

For this number of dissenting voices to come forward in a public consultation that typically does not target, engage or has access to such population segments may be worthy of **enhanced scrutiny**. An inquiry beyond the bias of dissenting opinions being categorised and dismissed as ‘deniers’ or ‘climate change is a hoax’ believers. **Such a bias appears to be evident in the consultation survey design** and, if so, may be at risk of distorting the analysis and findings being reported.

3. The presented board report makes no mention of the serious strategic concerns raised by ‘Seven Concerned Citizens’ and offers no measures to address these concerns. **Why?**

Furthermore, the report identifies ‘**corporation related risks**’ associated with strategic opportunity, financial and reputation from not endorsing and supporting the Torbay Climate

Partnership (TCP) Framework and Action Plan. Specifically naming failure to reach net zero targets, failure to acquire 'green' funding and reputational damage.

However, there is no mention of '**citizens related risks**' such as the adverse effects from the GWFOB FAP proposals on the regional people, business and society if the targets are pursued. There are also considerable adverse reputational risk considerations for Torbay Council to be endorsing, promoting and playing a lead role in the TCP driving the net zero programme and targets. Especially if public perceptions increasingly see through the veneer of 'greenwashing' propaganda and awaken beyond a tipping point of accepting the main-stream narrative concerning net zero and climate emergency.

In addition, section 8 of the board report highlights the risk of '*directing currently limited resources to less beneficial actions*' and how impact assessments identify no major adverse impacts from the proposals. These perhaps require **enhanced scrutiny** as the institutional capability to adequately discern and undertake such reviews has been shown to be highly problematic and deeply concerning. (*reference: Seven Concerned Citizens notice of rectification and accompanying report issued to Torbay Council Chief Executive & Devon Audit Partnership in September 2023: Part B Section 2 (pages 7 to 12) available on our website on the 'Torbay' page*).

Are 'corporation' and 'citizen' related agendas, risks and interests being considered and presented to your board in a transparent, balanced and equal manner?

It appears from this report that they are not.

Item 2.2 of the board report - '**There are no other options to consider**', together with the issues mentioned above are all **symptoms** of the bypassing of a strategic tier of process which '*Seven Concerned Citizens*' are highlighting to the Council Executive its Auditors and Advisors.

B. Seven Concerned Citizens suggestions:

In-order to assist the 'Overview and Scrutiny Board' in your review and recommendations we draw your attention to:

1. a **20 minute video produced at the request of some councillors** to explain the rectification notices served by '*Seven Concerned Citizens*' on three primary Councils (including Torbay) highlighting current needs for enhanced:

1. levels of scrutiny
 2. integration of polarized technical / scientific views
 3. strategic planning rigour
2. a **13 minute video and accompanying report reviewing the GWFOB FAP**

These can be accessed through the link above and the **consult page of our website**.

Please note that we have recently delivered the 20 minute presentation in a meeting attended by over 100 members of the public and councillors. A programme of such talks is being prepared for the South West region.

We offer this presentation to your Board and Officers which can be arranged very quickly to serve your September timescales and inform your reviews and recommendations.

C. Potential benefits & outcomes

Recognising the challenges associated with including and eliciting value contribution from dissident opinion, perspectives and groups, we applaud and seek to support the efforts of Torbay Council in this endeavour.

Our suggestions and offer to present to your Board and Officers may contribute to a strategically more balanced, rigorous and integrated approach. An approach that does not present an unacknowledged and unassessed risk, threat and harm to the citizens of this region. Furthermore, in service to the wellbeing of the citizens of our region this may positively inform the leadership and influence Torbay Council contributes to the TCP and GWFOB FAB.

Please be reminded that institutionally and across the region there appears to be a major tier of strategy making missing. This has been previously identified to the Executive Board of Torbay Council through a 'rectification notice' underpinned by a series of freedom of information inquiries. These notices with accompanying report and explanatory videos can be found on our website on the 'Torbay' page.

Left untreated, the implications and unintended consequences of this are far reaching and strategically significant.

By addressing this issue in an informed and open manner the best outcomes for both the council 'corporation' and 'citizens' interests may be better balanced and managed. Our suggestions serve to enable and support this outcome.

Please advise, if it is necessary to present this information as a letter, or in person, to the Overview and Scrutiny Board so that its' contents can be included and recorded formally in the minutes of the meeting on 4th September, or does this email suffice ?

We welcome your response.

Yours sincerely,

Seven Concerned Citizens