

**Meeting of the Council, Thursday, 12 September 2024**  
**Public Question Under Standing Order A24**

**Public Question 1**

**Margaret Forbes-Hamilton to the Cabinet Member for Tourism, Events & Culture and Corporate Services (Councillor Jackie Thomas)**

The Cabinet Response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board on the Review of Events, Culture and Tourism, 7th February 2024, stated in Recommendation 5:

“A strategic business case is being developed to go to the Capital and Growth Board in April and this will consider the landscaping project for the whole of the 17.8 acres of the Torre Abbey scheduled monument site. The business plan will include potential removal of the pitch and putt site (a public consultation may be required regarding the pitch and putt), conservation, repairs and upgrade the Spanish Barn.”

A decision was made in April, as the notice to invoke the break clause in the lease was pinned to the door of the pitch and putt hut on 29 April. Why was a public consultation with residents, tourism providers and other interested parties not undertaken before the decision was made to invoke the break clause the lease on the pitch and putt and public bowls facilities in Abbey Park and who made the decision to not undertake a public consultation? Where can the business case/plan underlying the decision to revoke the lease on the Pitch and Putt and public bowling green in Abbey Park be seen?

---

**Public Question 2**

**Dr Simmon McGinnes to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The Council has numerous policies in place saying that it supports active travel and has made repeated claims to that effect. For example: *“We want to ultimately deliver improvements in Torbay that don’t just simply encourage people to travel actively. We want to make it genuinely easier and more attractive so that people feel enabled and increasingly desire to make those journeys on foot, cycle, etc.”* (<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/roads/travel/active-travel/>).

But the Council’s track record suggests otherwise. The Council has provided almost no traffic free or off-road cycle paths in Torquay (see <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/media/2402/torbay-cycle-map-new.pdf>). The paths that do exist have issues and are not joined up. Cyclists in Torbay risk injury every day when forced to share busy carriageways with cars, buses and lorries.

For example, the “Hospital Trail” behind Torre station has made it to number 4 in the list of worst UK bike paths (<https://www.welovecycling.com/wide/2021/11/08/top-10-worst-cycle-lanes-in-the-uk/>). It is difficult to enter the path from the south, and it gives no access at all to Torre station. It is difficult for cyclists to cross Shiphay Lane, to access the northern section of the trail, owing to the absence of the planned crossing. Moreover, the cycle path was built with a large set of steps in the middle, which render it unpassable for most cyclists!

Recently, the Council has decided to remove the planned cycle path from its flagship harbour regeneration (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp9vxy1r3yno>). The Council has chosen instead to prioritise trees over cyclists, forcing cyclists onto a single carriageway that will be twice as busy as before. This is not just a practical barrier for cyclists. It is also symbolic, since the presence of the planned cycle path on the Strand, at the heart of Torquay, would have demonstrated Torbay Council’s commitment to active and sustainable travel in a very visible way.

How genuinely does the Council support active travel, given its recent decision to remove the cycling lane from the harbour development?

---

### **Public Question 3**

#### **Mr Nick Huntley to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Large public and private organisations start with a Vision. This vision, supported by Strategy is underpinned by detailed Plans that determine the application of limited resources.

Every decision a Council makes, every penny of public money must therefore follow a golden thread from plans, through strategy if it is to deliver this Vision.

Your Vision is a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Torbay for all.

The various Strategies that support this vision quite rightly place the health of residents at the forefront, a point made very well in the Joint Health and Well-being Strategy which specifically aims to improve environmental sustainability and physical activity.

Of equal importance, the council have formally recognised and committed to the need to accelerate action and make significant progress in addressing climate change, especially pertinent as we are a coastal community.

Could the Council therefore explain to me why, when faced with a decision of cycling infrastructure vs trees, or put another way, the safety of children, families and tourists vs trees, they threw out this crucial section of the carefully considered Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan - a plan which underpins the Council’s Strategies and Vision.

Before I ask for the response, I have heard the reason, or excuse, of previous consultation driving the decision. I do not know of any public organisation that would solely use a 6-year old consultation to support current decision-making of such significance, one which is so counter to the stated vision and strategy, and especially when so much has happened in the intervening period. Public opinion has changed dramatically in the intervening years, with even greater focus on public health and our planet.

Reconsidering the decision to remove a cycle path on the Torbay Harbour front by creating some provision in the public realm, in the context of delivering against a long-term promise, is surely the right and proper thing to do. This is not a single issue topic, the project should be the catalyst for a greener and more sustainable Torbay, one which contributes to a happy, healthy and prosperous Torbay for all, attractive to residents and tourists alike.

This £4.7 million pound story could be so much more positive. I would like to know if the Council are going to deliver safe cycling infrastructure as a part of this project, thereby demonstrating that they are actually committed to delivering the LCWIP which they adopted in 2021 with actions and not just words?

---

#### **Public Question 4**

##### **Mr David Pressley to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

How does the Council intend to continue to implement its Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26 when considering future planning applications from developers and also in making its Statement of Case at any future appeals, when it does not comply with the strategy in its own developments?

---

#### **Public Question 5**

##### **Dr Ann Ashworth to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Has Torbay Council consulted with local Cycling groups, such as Mid Devon Cycling Club (which has 400 members), the Cyclists Touring Club and the Torbay VeloPark Veterans Group (the VeloVets) about the revised roadside plans which do not include a cycle path? If not, why not?