

Shoalstone Seawater Pool

Our 10 Year Strategy

“surviving to thriving”

“Safeguard and promote Shoalstone Seawater Pool, a unique heritage resource, for the enjoyment and pleasure of the people of Brixham, residents and visitors, today and for future generations”

Shoalstone Pool Community Interest Company

September 2019

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A Message from the Chair

The Shoalstone Pool Community Interest Company (SPCIC) was set up in 2014 by Brixham Town Council, when they took responsibility for the pool from Torbay Council. Since that time we have, with the support of our magnificent band of volunteers and the Friends of Shoalstone Pool, successfully maintained and run the Shoalstone site for the people of Brixham, residents and visitors alike. We have gained a huge wealth of experience and we are justifiably very proud of all that has been achieved.

However, we can't just carry on as we have been doing. The pool itself and the surrounds are gradually deteriorating, and we are facing an uphill struggle to keep up with the repairs year on year. We are very heavily reliant on volunteers and donations, and, even though our intention is that volunteers will always be very much part of Shoalstone, we need substantial investment to make the operations and management robust and sustainable. To thrive for another hundred years we will need to embrace new ways of working. We need to see change as an essential feature of growth and development, not as a threat.

With this in mind, we are developing a 10-year strategy for success that will give us the framework to support the delivery of our ambition for the years to come. Our aim is to build on our last major community consultation in September 2017; consult again on the draft strategy in the Autumn of 2019, before finalising in Spring 2020. We will then publish an annual delivery plan to take us towards our goals.

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The Historic Town of Brixham

Brixham sits at the southern end of Torbay. Its proud history dates back to Saxon times when the town was divided by a marshy lane, with Cow Town bordering the rural heartland of South Devon and Fish Town clustered around the harbour. On 5th November 1688, William of Orange landed in Brixham on his way to become King as part of the Glorious Revolution. In the 19th century Brixham led the development of fishing trawlers. Brixham was known as 'the mother of deep-sea fishing' with the distinctive 'Red Sails in the Sunset' of Brixham's trawlers coated with locally mined ochre for protection, a timeless feature of the town. You can still see the majesty of original Brixham Trawlers sailing from the harbour more than a century after their launch.

Nowadays fishing continues as the main industry; Brixham is the most important fishing port in the UK. Tourism is Brixham's second industry and Shoalstone intends to be a major contributor to the town's tourism strategy.

Brixham has a population of 16,750 (2015 census) and the 2018/2020 Torbay Joint Strategic Needs Assessment tells us that compared to the rest of Torbay and England:

- 1 in 3 of us, is aged 65 or over; we have a higher level of dependent people and more of us report bad health and a long term health problem.

- Fewer of us live in very deprived neighbourhoods, fewer of us live in rented accommodation and we have lower levels of overcrowding; housing conditions are better here.
- We have lower rates of crime, domestic violence and anti-social behaviour and fewer of us report anxiety or mood disorders.

Brixham is a good place to live; however, this summarised data masks the pockets of deprivation, familiar in seaside towns across the county, which, in Brixham, co-exist alongside more affluent second-home owners. Preventing poorer health in older age is obviously a key priority for Brixham; Shoalstone Seawater Pool has a key role to play in achieving this.

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The History of Brixham's Seawater Pool

Shoalstone Seawater Pool was built on the site of a natural rock pool that people have used for bathing since 1896. Two walls were built around some rocks to retain water for bathing at all times of the tide.

In 1926 the Pool was altered to more or less the shape that you see today. The removal of bedrock created a gradient from shallow to deep, with a deep end more than twice the depth of the original. For most of the Second World War the pool was closed, with coastal defences constructed.

The pool reopened in 1946. The start of the season used to be marked by a local woman, Minnie Bowman, jumping off the diving board wrapped in the Union Flag, a tradition that continued for many years. In 1979 a New Year storm damaged the pool, dumping most of the surrounding concrete into the pool. Popular support prevented closure by Torbay Council; the pool was repaired and a wall built along the sea edge to try to prevent future storm damage. Rumours of closure continued to rumble and in 2004 Torbay Council announced they could no longer guarantee funding. A working party (which subsequently became The Friends of Shoalstone Pool) was set up to keep the pool open, working in partnership with Torbay Council. The FOSP helped reduce running costs by volunteers helping to keep the pool clean, undertaking routine maintenance and refurbishment as well as fundraising for equipment.

In 2009, 11 wooden beach huts were sited for locals to hire for a 16-week season. In 2012, the town was inspired to support the annual pool refurbishment and to challenge Torbay Council's plan to open only for the six-week school holiday. Young people from Brixham College worked with an artist to create a sea-water mural which is visible from far out to sea.

Shoalstone Seawater Pool celebrated its 90th birthday in 2016; it holds a wealth of memories for the people of Brixham, residents and visitors.

In 2017 the SPCIC conducted a major community consultation to explore potential futures for the pool and the surrounding site. This strategy builds upon the foundations laid then.

The revival of Shoalstone Seawater Pool is mirrored across the country where we can see a renaissance of many exquisite outdoor pools, rescued from dereliction or decay. Public demand and community campaigns are inspiring a national rebirth that is taking pools from **reviving** through **surviving** to **thriving**.

We can see in our own history that we have met the first challenge of **reviving** and this strategy is designed to take us from **“surviving to thriving”**.

Consultation Question, are there other aspects of Brixham/Shoalstone's history that we should highlight?

Our **PURPOSE** is to:

“Safeguard and promote Shoalstone Seawater Pool, a unique heritage resource, for the enjoyment and pleasure of the people of Brixham, residents and visitors, today and for future generations”

Consultation Question: is this the right purpose?

Our **VALUES**, the things we believe in and hold dear, have shaped our strategy:

We believe in COMMUNITY and that bringing people together changes lives for the better.

We believe in BRIXHAM and we want to help generate a thriving economy for the town.

We believe in VOLUNTEERING and contributing to make the world a better place for everyone.

We believe that being CLOSE TO NATURE, having fun and swimming in cold water makes everyone feel better!

We have agreed some **PRINCIPLES** that shape how we will work together, as a Board, with our volunteers, with our partners and our community:

1. We will have a clear vision of what we want to achieve, how we will achieve it and we will deliver our ambition.
2. We will treat everyone as we would want to be treated: with courtesy, kindness and consideration but also with honesty and integrity.

3. We will be collegiate and collaborative, but we will have the courage to make difficult decisions and the tenacity to see them through.

Consultation Question: are these the right values and principles?

To deliver our purpose to:

“Safeguard and promote Shoalstone Seawater Pool, a unique heritage resource, for the enjoyment and pleasure of the people of Brixham, residents and visitors, today and for future generations”,

we have identified our core strategic priorities:

- Governance
- Physical Infrastructure
- Resource and Capacity
- Pool and Site Operations
- Marketing and Communications

The priorities are presented as discrete and separate, but of course they are completely inter-related and have to be understood in that way.

There are some inter-dependencies, which will require sequencing and these are clarified in the text below.

Consultation Question: Are these the right strategic priorities?

Strategic Priority One

GOVERNANCE

To secure the capital investment we need, to guarantee the future of our unique heritage resource, we must resolve our governance structure. The site is the responsibility of the volunteer run Shoalstone Pool Community Interest Company (SPCIC). However the SPCIC is in an unhelpfully dependent relationship with Brixham Town Council (BTC) and Torbay Council (TC). Major decisions have to be approved by BTC and the café leaseholder is BTC rather than SPCIC, which undermines the authority of SPCIC to fully manage the site. It is time for us to loosen the apron strings and become a mature independent organisation. We intend to **dissolve the SPCIC and establish a Community Interest Organisation** that will better serve our purpose, enabling us to apply for funding which our current structure precludes. We will however maintain a strong partnership with BTC and TC (and with other stakeholders) and we will hold board membership space for town and unitary authority councillors. This partnership will ensure we can tap into and contribute to the wider community and economic regeneration strategies and plans for the town, as well as locating our work within the town's democratically mandated institution, the town council. BTC has always recognised and valued the work of SPCIC and has allocated what has proved to

be an absolutely essential grant to support the continued operation of this valuable community resource. This will continue to be necessary until the SPCIC can thrive independently.

We intend to **create a membership scheme** that will enhance the community's sense of ownership of the pool and its surrounds, increase engagement and usage. This will enable a wider stakeholder network and a stronger community franchise (including young people) to advise and support the Board to develop and deliver the strategy and ensure the successful development and operations of the pool and the site.

The Board of SPCIC is small with six members. In embracing independence, through a new governance structure, we will need to become more robust and sustainable. We will also need to professionalise, we will need to become more than willing amateurs. We intend to **explore and build stronger partnerships with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations**

What have we done so far?

- 2013 a Community Trust was formed to run the pool and site in partnership with the Nautique Dive School. This ran for one year. The following year a new independent company Shoalstone Pool Ltd was formed to run the pool through a partnership between the FOSP and Brixham Town Council, with BTC leasing the pool from Torbay Council. Shoalstone Pool Ltd subsequently became SPCIC to reflect its not for profit and community orientated nature.

- 2016 an application by SPCIC for charitable status was refused by the Charities Commission. SPCIC was perceived to be running a council service for the council and therefore not eligible for charitable status. This decision had important and adverse consequences in relation to tax status and eligibility to apply for funding
- 2016 the Friends of Shoalstone Pool explored becoming the charitable arm of the limited company, FOSP preferred not to pursue this.

What do we plan to do next?

- Dissolve the SPCIC and create a CIO. As part of this development we will resolve the relationship between the CIO and FOSP
- Create a membership scheme
- Secure high profile patrons for the CIO
- Build stronger partnerships with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations

Consultation Question Have we included everything and are our planned next steps the right ones?

Strategic Priority Two

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Lido Guide 2019 compares Shoalstone to Australia's famous Bondi Icebergs Seapool and more recently Shoalstone was included, by The Architectural Digest as one of the 10 most iconic sea pools on the world. The comparisons are fully justified. The pool is perfectly situated, on the western edge of beautiful Torbay, sheltered alongside the ocean with the magnificently appointed Green above and fascinating rock formations and rockpools on all sides. We are committed to a **transformational approach** to the physical infrastructure of the site. Our ambition is to **secure a substantial capital investment** to fortify the sea wall, repair the pool lining, modernise the pool drainage system and develop the site to make Shoalstone **an exciting and dynamic destination** for local people and visitors. Local donations, fundraising and the annual grant from the Town Council have enabled us to maintain the pool from year to year but securing its future requires a more substantial capital investment.

What have we done so far?

- 2015: a successful application to the Coastal Revival Heritage Fund secured £50k for repairs to the pool base including a whole new slab in the deep end, installing a shower and upgrading the changing rooms as well as the first feasibility study and the first round of public consultation by Kay Elliot. Some ideas from the feasibility study and consultation have become reality. Others, for example a health and well-being resource and developing the green, are dependent upon securing investment.
- 2014: we identified a disused space and offered it as a space for the development of a café, now operational and successful.

- 2018: following the extensive damage wrought by Storm Emma, crowd-funding raised £13k that enabled substantial repairs to the fabric of the pool and site and repairs to the pool sides at the deep end
- 2019: we took responsibility for the overflow car park as well as responsibility for maintaining and managing the main car park. We changed car park provider and increased the income, which makes a significant and essential contribution to the revenue flow for the pool and site. Site security has also been enhanced
- 2019: we commissioned a pool survey to establish the future potential of the pool and site (see our website for the full survey)

What do we plan to do next?

We will Secure Investment

To achieve this we must first resolve our governance (see priority one above). Our research into other pools and lidos shows that there are potential sponsors and charitable grants; and these act as the springboard to enable the move from surviving to thriving but our current governance arrangements effectively prohibit our access to these.

The 2019 pool survey assures us that the pool's future can be secured with judicious investment. To be successful applications for investment will need to evidence:

- wide and substantial community engagement and involvement

- a sustainable and robust business plan
- extended opening through a longer season and a capacity to deliver wider social value

We will commission detailed and fully costed design work

This will inform our applications to, for example, the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has been one of the major sponsors underpinning the revival of Britain's proud tradition of sea-pool and lido open water facilities.

The design work will include the other site infrastructure, for example the toilet block, which is at risk of being undermined in future by coastal erosion. The basic structure is sound and can be further developed to include other resources. We are considering developing this block into a health and well-being hub, specifically addressing the needs of our local community. Making that block secure and substantially developing it is a key element in our infrastructure development plan.

There is a covenant on the Green that impacts upon any potential development on the eastern end of the site but currently the space is poorly used and the disused shelter is an eyesore. Our intention is that the disused shelter will be re-purposed to create beach huts, for which there is a demand and which provide essential revenue. The site design work will fully explore the potential of the Green and turn our ideas into fully costed plans.

We will commission a building programme

The proposed design model will be subject to a comprehensive community consultation, the findings of which will be incorporated into the final design that will inform the building programme

Consultation Question Have we included everything and are our planned next steps the right ones?

Strategic Priority Three

RESOURCE and CAPACITY

The task of SPCIC to date has been to ensure the survival of the pool and site. The Directors rely on the hard work and commitment of the magnificent band of volunteers. We believe that the strength of SPCIC is directly related to its base of volunteer support. National research shows us that the pool of volunteers is an ageing one and that longer working hours, changing working practices and more precarious employment is impacting on the pool of people available for volunteering. In these circumstances, task oriented volunteering is much more likely to elicit sign up. FOSP recognises the implications of this changing demographic for their longevity and are exploring ways in which working together might limit the risk of resource drying up. A more informal approach to volunteers (which best describes our current

approach) will not be sufficient for major funders. The membership scheme is designed to **support a more proactive approach to the recruitment, training and support of volunteers.**

To date the SPCIC Directors are principally focused on all the activity that is required to run the business (HR, Health and Safety, Framework of Standard Operating Procedures, Pool and Site Maintenance, Cleaning and Seasonal Readiness Preparations, Beach Hut Rental, Fund Raising, Events Planning and Delivery, Car Park Management, Budget and Finance Management and so on and so on).

We have prioritised the roles of caretaker, seasonal pool manager and seasonal lifeguards for paid employment. To move from surviving to thriving, we will need to **employ a full time Operations and Development Manager**. This will free up Directors to relinquish the operational activity that consumes so much of our resource and capacity and focus on the proper work of the Directors, strategic long-term activity to create a thriving resource that's improves the health and well-being of the community of Brixham and contributes substantially to the town's tourism economy.

The relationship with the café tenant has been challenging. The income from the café rental and a strong and mutually respectful relationship is an important contribution to the resource and capacity of SPCIC. We have been working with BTC to resolve the challenges in the relationship with the café tenant but, at the time of drafting this strategy, the lease remains unsigned. The café is an anchor resource for the future sustainability of the pool and site. **Resolving the relationship with the café tenant is therefore critical.**

We intend to **adapt the operating model** which we inherited from Torbay Council. Our relationship with other lidos and sea pools has allowed us to compare our model with others and examine options. This is set out below under priority four, Pool Operations.

A successful application for a substantial capital investment in the fabric and infrastructure of the pool and site will rely on evidence of the long-term sustainability of the resource. We will need to **extend the season, secure reliable income streams** and show how we **contribute to wider, social value priorities**, not least the economy and the health and well-being of the population. We have to **move from an amateur to a professional operation.**

What have we done so far?

- Put in place a framework of policies, procedures and guidance for staff and volunteers
- Maintained and grown the pool of volunteers to ensure recovery from Storm Emma and the successful operation of the pool for five successive seasons
- Established the beach huts and car parking as secure income streams
- Progressed the relationship with the café tenant towards securing a signed lease (still outstanding) and commercial rent
- Scheduled pool cleaning days to quieter days of the week, with good advance notice.

What do we plan to do next?

- Secure the signed café lease, secure commercial rent income, and build a better relationship with the café tenant
- Secure and allocate resource to allow us to appoint an Operations and Development Manager
- Adapt the operating model

Consultation Question Have we included everything and are our planned next steps the right ones?

Strategic Priority Four

OPERATIONS

Our capacity to deliver enhanced operations for the pool and the site is dependent upon securing investment, as well as managing our resource and capacity more effectively, so as to harness the capacity we already have, deploy it effectively and crucially grow it.

As part of the site survey undertaken in Summer 2019, observations were taken of pool and site usage. In summary they showed relatively good use of the pool by young people after school/college/work and during holidays, and relatively low levels of use by other users. Because the site does not lend itself to managed entry and because we want to encourage take up, pool users are not charged, they are asked to donate to support the pool's upkeep. The pool is, like a beach, a potentially free resource for individual visitors, all pool users having equal

access, irrespective of income, which is an important and highly valued feature of the operating model, particularly in a context of increasing child poverty and continued reliance on food banks for families both in and out of work. The membership scheme is designed to secure a more reliable income stream from actual and potential pool users. In 2020 we intend to measure pool use to **establish a baseline from which we will set targets to increase use by targeted groups.** Preventing poorer health in older age, as well as challenging the obesity epidemic will be the focus of targeted activity to increase use of the pool and the site.

The pool and site has to attract visitors who might otherwise choose to stay at home or engage in alternative activity. Following the 2018 public meeting, SPCIC has **increased the number and range of events and activities** including dog swims and night swims. This will continue, in response to community demand. We are aware that local pool users would welcome an extended season. We also know from the experience of other sea-pools and lidos that potential investors need to be satisfied that the pool's season is not foreshortened. A 26-week season is a reasonable expectation. Over the next five years we will gradually extend the season until we reach 26 weeks. This has significant implications for our investment in lifeguarding, which traditionally has been principally delivered by school and college students. This workforce would not be available for an extended season.

Not all sea-pools and lidos are lifeguarded and our 2019 Health and Safety Assessment challenged us to consider whether we continue to lifeguard. Shoalstone currently is the only lifeguarded coastal water between Teignmouth and Blackpool Sands, both over 10 miles away. For

less confident swimmers and pool users this is an important consideration. However staffing the pool at times when use is very low is not an effective deployment of resources. We intend to **review the use of lifeguards**, and explore with RNLI their potential as a lifeguard provider (the RNLI lifeguards other beaches in Devon). We also plan to **recruit a pool of more mature volunteer lifeguards** who will be available to lifeguard for special events outside of the school/college holiday period. *We will continue to lifeguard the busy season (from late May bank holiday to weekend after August bank holiday)*

Shoalstone is not yet a destination for the local population of Torbay and for visitors. It is poorly signposted from the town and we have had limited resource to drive our marketing and communications strategy (see priority five below).

What have we done so far?

- Increased the range and variety of events, actively seeking to increase use of the pool and secure the necessary increased revenue
- Commissioned an independent Health and Safety Risk Assessment

What do we plan to do next?

- Baseline pool and site use, set targets and implement actions to increase use for target demographic
- Review lifeguarding
- Continue to increase the number and range of events and activities

Consultation Question Have we included everything and are our planned next steps the right ones?

Strategic Priority Five

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS

The demands of operational delivery have impacted on the time available for Directors to focus on marketing and communication. As we move from surviving to thriving, we intend to strengthen this area of work. Our research shows that **strengthened signage** is essential to build presence and to create a strong destination branding to increase footfall. Similarly **a stronger social media presence** builds brand recognition as well as momentum and energy. Some of **our materials** are a bit tired and **need a refresh**. We need to **strengthen relationships and partnerships** with the pools existing users, for example Grenville House and the English Language Schools so that they own their part in the future of Shoalstone and we build a culture of reciprocity. Shoalstone is unique but there is much to learn from other pools and lidos, and practices we can adapt or adopt to strengthen effectiveness and well as value for money. A stronger partnership with the Brixham Museum will help us to better tell our important heritage story. There are specific health and well-being partnerships to be fostered with health and well-being providers, for example GP practices, Public Health, yoga, mindfulness and other alternative practitioners as well as sports practitioners and occupational and physiotherapists.

What have we done so far?

- Established a social media presence through our website, Facebook and Twitter
- Established a logo and branding
- Submitted media releases in print and on radio, with a regular feature in The Brixham Signal
- Held our first open community meeting in 2018
- Lifeguards in uniform rattled tins to fundraise in the town on pool clean day

What do we plan to do next?

- Improve and increase signage in the town, refreshing tired banners and materials
- Strengthen our social media presence once Directors have relinquished the operational demands currently on them
- Strengthen relationships and partnerships
- Tell our story in a more coherent and compelling way

Consultation Question Have we included everything and are our planned next steps the right ones?

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

RISK DESCRIPTION	RAG RATING	MITIGATION	REVISED RAG
<p>CLIMATE CHANGE</p> <p>Rising sea level predicted, long-term risk, not expected to increase significantly in the lifetime of the strategy but will impact significantly over the lifetime of the pool and its surrounds.</p> <p>Increased number and impact of extreme weather events, leading to structural damage.</p> <p>Shoalstone's location is generally protected, sitting inside the shelter of Torbay; the risk of vulnerability is in the combination of tide and wind direction.</p>	<p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p>	<p>Will be factored in to the infrastructure design and build proposals</p> <p>Shoalstone will be considered as part of the area risk and response to climate change (all footprints, Brixham, Torbay, South Devon, South West Coastal Region)</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p>
<p>POOL DEPTH AND SIZE, PROXIMITY TO OCEAN</p> <p>Inherent risk of sea water pool to all users</p>	Amber	<p>Robust standard Operating Protocols</p> <p>Compliance with HSE guidance</p> <p>Good signage</p> <p>Appropriate safety equipment on site</p>	Amber
<p>VOLUNTEER CAPACITY</p> <p>Too few people with too little time to do all the work required to support the pool and site</p>	Amber	<p>Membership scheme</p> <p>Appoint Ops and Development Manager</p> <p>Resolve FOSP/CIO</p>	Green

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Consultation Question Are these the right strategic risks and the right ratings?

APPENDIX TWO

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Over the last 3 years we have:

- worked to professionalise and update our accounting systems to give an accurate picture of the pool finances and set annual budgets
- teamed up with Small Biz Accounts, moving from a paper-based system to an online accounts package, to give more timely and accurate financial data
- moved the accounts year end from 31st March to 31st May to match the pool season/major expenditure

A summary of the accounts for the last 3 years is presented below:

	1 June 2018 to 31 May 2019	1 April 2017 to 31 May 2018 (NOTE 14 MONTHS)	1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017
Turnover			
Car park income	29,266	31,745	17,736
Beach hut rental	6,488	5,463	3,200
Café rental	3,300	3,616	3,550
Furniture hire	3,317	2,450	1,775
Donations (FoSP, crowd funding, poolside, plus other)	22,759	29,849	10,180
Grants (BTC plus other)	5,000		9,040
Other income (pool hire/merchandise sales/advertising)	1,457	1,218	387
	71,587	74,341	45,868
Expenditure			
Staff costs (salaries plus training/uniforms)	27,344	30,860	21,898
Repairs and maintenance	31,097	22,183	(3,494)
Insurance	3,359	3,792	3,698
Utilities (power and water)	2,860	2,242	3,328
Cleaning	4,970	3,988	
Consultancy/legal fees	840	1,674	2,688
Other expenditure (admin, advertising, consumables)	5,223	5,728	3,893
	75,693	70,467	32,011
Profit/Loss before taxation	(4,106)	3,874	13,857

Currently approximately 40% of our income is from donations and grants, with large donations from the FoSP over the last two years to cover major structural repairs.

The monies budgeted by BTC have not all been called upon, and as of 31st March 2019 the Council hold an ear-marked reserve of £27,467 specifically for maintenance of Shoalstone Pool.

What we plan to do next?

- Continue to streamline the accounts procedures and update our financial regulations to accurately reflect current practices
- Increase revenue streams so that our site-generated income at least covers all general day-to-day running costs.

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