

Torpoint & Rame

UK Town of Culture 2028

Strategic Analysis, Delivery Routes and Immediate Actions

Part One

The Competition - A Clear- Eyed Analysis and Strategic Recommendation

The UK Town of Culture 2028 competition represents a rare national moment. It is not simply a grant programme. It is an opportunity to reposition identity, accelerate confidence and alter trajectory. For Torpoint and the wider Rame Peninsula, the significance of that should not be underestimated.

However, ambition must be matched with realism. This competition will be strong. The headline funding and the national recognition attached to the title will attract serious bids from towns across the country. Many will view it as a catalytic platform for regeneration and civic pride. The shortlist will be limited. That means this is not about participation; it is about competitiveness.

The panel will not be looking for the most obviously cultural town. They will not simply count venues, heritage assets or event programmes. Recent national cultural competitions demonstrate a pattern: awards go to places able to articulate a compelling narrative of transformation – towns where investment would make a material difference, not simply amplify existing advantage.

The essential strategic question is therefore not whether Torpoint and Rame are cultural. It is whether cultural recognition and investment would change the town's trajectory in a meaningful way – and whether that case can be presented credibly.

Torpoint sits in a distinctive position. It is a gateway community, shaped by its proximity to Plymouth yet defined by its own cohesion and character. It is compact, interdependent and resilient. It is also, at times, overlooked. Economic and cultural gravity often pulls across the Tamar. Investment can bypass. Perception can lag behind reality.

The Place Maker.

Yet within that position lies opportunity. Cultural investment in an already affluent, highly resourced town may refine. Cultural investment in a cohesive, under-recognised place can transform. The competition is likely to balance geography, scale and context. Torpoint and Rame are not competing against large historic tourism centres or university towns. They are competing within a category of smaller gateway towns with strong community identity but limited national profile.

In that field, clarity becomes decisive.

A generic submission, one that lists assets, repeats policy language or inflates claims, will not stand out. A submission that clearly articulates who we are, why this matters here and how change would embed long-term, becomes credible.

This requires discipline.

The narrative must be coherent and confident. It must avoid exaggeration. It must demonstrate understanding of both opportunity and challenge. It must show that this is not a town chasing a title, but a town ready to use a title as a lever.

From this analysis flows a clear recommendation: the submission must be tightly authored, strategically framed and grounded in real place intelligence. It should not become diluted through excessive consultation. Nor should it be written in isolation from the town's lived experience. The balance between authorship and engagement will determine competitiveness.

Part Two

Three Possible Routes - Ambition, Risk and Competitive Position

There are three realistic pathways available. Each differs in ambition, coordination and impact.

The first route is contained and disciplined. Under this model, the Expression of Interest would be developed through a tightly authored narrative responding directly to the three core application questions: vision, local need and empowerment. The writing would be clear, grounded and reflective of Torpoint's character. It would articulate a confident future vision, address structural challenges honestly and describe how culture functions as civic infrastructure rather than entertainment.

Engagement would take place primarily online, with a steering group reviewing drafts at key stages. The process would be efficient. The submission would read with one coherent voice. It would be strategically sound.

The strength of this route lies in clarity and control. The risk lies in visibility. It describes the town persuasively but does not necessarily demonstrate activation. In a competitive field, that distinction may matter.

The second route strengthens competitiveness by grounding authorship in structured, in-person engagement. It retains the discipline of a tightly written submission but builds it on collective insight.

This approach would involve a focused two-day visit to Torpoint and Rame. During that time, two structured workshops would take place. One would bring together cultural leaders and creative producers. The other would convene civic leaders and decision-makers. These sessions would interrogate the application questions directly: what is the genuine future vision; what are the structural barriers to growth; what differentiates Torpoint from comparable towns; what is the authentic voice of the place?

Alongside the workshops, guided town safaris would offer a structured exploration of the physical and social fabric of the town. Walking the high street, waterfront and neighbourhoods with key stakeholders grounds discussion in lived experience. It tests assumptions. It reveals friction points and opportunities and it sharpens narrative credibility.

A further session with a steering group would focus on engagement planning and strategic framing. From this structured engagement, a clear brief would emerge. The submission would then be written in a disciplined and cohesive voice, but informed by genuine collective articulation.

The strength of this route is balance. It enhances authenticity and competitiveness without overwhelming capacity. It creates shared ownership while preserving narrative coherence. The risk is modest coordination pressure, but manageable.

The Place Maker.

The third route is more ambitious. It incorporates the workshops and site visits described above but extends into visible early activation. This might involve linking young people with older residents and cultural producers in a creative process that surfaces identity in tangible form. It would require broader stakeholder mobilisation. It would generate outputs that could anchor the submission, demonstrating cultural democracy in action.

This route maximises differentiation. It shows the town functioning as a cultural ecosystem. It builds local momentum and evidences empowerment. However, it requires sustained energy, tight coordination and clear leadership within a compressed timeframe. Without disciplined management, it risks becoming overextended.

In weighing these routes, the strongest position appears to lie between the first and second. The submission must be authored with clarity and strategic discipline. It must read as one coherent argument. But that argument should be grounded in structured, meaningful engagement that surfaces the town's authentic identity and ambition.

This hybrid approach enhances competitiveness without creating unsustainable pressure. It positions Torpoint and Rame as serious, self-aware and collaborative.

Part Three

Immediate Next Steps - Creating the Conditions for Delivery

If Torpoint and Rame choose to proceed, momentum must now be structured.

The first requirement is the establishment of a small cultural consortium or steering group. This should consist of five or six individuals prepared to meet frequently over the next month and actively contribute to delivery. Representation should include civic leadership, cultural insight and practical coordination. This group must not be symbolic. It must be operational and committed. The first meeting of this group needs to be held the w/b 9th March. The agenda will be to agree, method of approach and action list and a stakeholder engagement plan.

Within that group, one individual based within town should take on a clear coordination role. This person would manage communication across the town, ensure stakeholders are informed and engaged, and act as the on-the-ground lead during site visits and workshops. Clear responsibility prevents drift.

Secondly, a structured list of key stakeholders and consultees should be compiled. This should include civic leaders, cultural organisations, creative producers, schools, business representatives and community anchors across Torpoint and Rame. Alongside this, a working list of cultural producers and artists operating locally should be assembled to ensure local capacity is visible and accessible.

Thirdly, access to all relevant strategic documentation should be secured. This includes the Arts & Culture Strategy, the Neighbourhood Development Plan and any regeneration or place-based frameworks. Alignment strengthens credibility and prevents duplication.

Fourthly, if the structured engagement route is selected, modest enabling resources should be secured to cover travel, two overnight stays, meeting spaces and workshop hospitality. These costs are modest but necessary to ensure meaningful and focused engagement. This visit and workshops would need to undertaken w/b 16th March.

Finally, clarity is required regarding authorship and accountability. The submission should be made in the name of a clearly defined body – whether that is Torpoint Town Council, a Torpoint & Rame partnership or a named consortium. Panels look for governance clarity.

The opportunity is real. The competition will be serious. The difference will lie not in how loudly Torpoint speaks, but in how clearly and confidently it articulates its identity and ambition.

With structure, leadership and disciplined engagement, Torpoint and Rame can compete credibly. The decision now is not whether the town is worthy. It is how ambitiously it wishes to position itself.

Recommended Direction

With the time available the strongest balance lies between Option Two and Option Three.

We retain the clarity, discipline and authored strength of a tightly written submission, while grounding it in structured, meaningful engagement. This approach strengthens competitiveness, builds local ownership and ensures authenticity without overextending the town's capacity.

It positions Torpoint and Rame as serious, confident and self-aware, not overstated, not underprepared.

Closing Position

Torpoint and Rame are not competing on scale. They are competing on clarity, authenticity and potential impact.

If we establish structure quickly, secure modest enabling resources and align around a disciplined but collaborative approach, we can position ourselves credibly in a national field.

The opportunity is significant.

The competition will be strong.

The difference will lie in how seriously we choose to compete.

With clarity and shared commitment, Torpoint and Rame can do so with confidence.

Immediate Next Steps Summary & Checklist

To move forward effectively, the following actions are required.

1. Establish a Cultural Consortium / Steering Group

A small, committed group of five to six individuals should be formally established. This group must be willing to meet regularly over the next month and actively contribute to the submission process.

It should represent civic leadership, cultural insight and practical coordination. Its purpose is operational – to guide direction, unlock access and maintain momentum.

One individual within this group should take on a clear leadership and coordination role. This person would:

- Manage town- wide communications
- Coordinate stakeholders
- Act as on- the- ground lead during site visits
- Maintain pace and clarity

2. Stakeholder and Cultural Mapping

A structured list of key stakeholders and consultees should be compiled, including:

- Civic leaders
- Cultural organisations
- Creative producers
- Education partners
- Business representatives
- Community anchors

In parallel, a working list of cultural producers and artists within Torpoint and Rame should be prepared to ensure visibility of local capacity.

3. Access to Strategic Documentation

All current place- based and cultural strategies should be shared, including:

- Arts & Culture Strategy
- Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Regeneration or economic development strategies
- Any relevant policy or framework documents

This ensures alignment and avoids duplication.

4. Practical Resourcing

If Option Two (or three) is selected, a modest budget of approximately £800 should be secured to cover:

- Travel
- Two overnight stays in Torpoint
- Meeting room hire across two days
- A small hospitality budget (£100) for workshop refreshments

These are enabling costs rather than programme costs, but they are essential to effective engagement.

5. Timing

Agreement is needed on the most suitable dates for a two-day visit, ensuring availability of key participants. This should be confirmed promptly to protect delivery timelines.

6. Submission Identity

Finally, clarity is required on who the submission will formally come from. Whether it is Torpoint Town Council, a Torpoint & Rame partnership, or a named consortium, accountability must be explicit and visible.