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# Unlocking Your Place Potential – Report and Feedback



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# About the visit and this report

The High Streets Task Force visited Newquay on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to undertake an *Unlocking Your Place Potential* diagnostic visit. Steve Millington and Joe Barratt were the High Streets Task Force Experts undertaking the visit.

The attendees representing Newquay can be found in Appendix 1.

The purpose of the visit was to diagnose the main barrier to your transformation. In other words, what problems, if not resolved now, will make it difficult for the town to make change. To do this the Expert wanted to understand more about the challenges facing the town, your plans for transformation, meet key stakeholders, ask questions and tour the town.

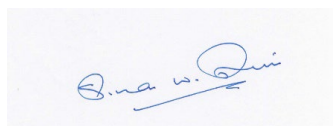
**As a result of the diagnostic process, the Expert has identified** the historical positioning of Newquay as ‘just a holiday town’, with little understanding of the needs of the resident population and capacity to understand and react to significant macro opportunities and challenges, as the main barrier to transformation.

The town faces some significant challenges if it is to become a successful visitor destination that also serves the needs of the local community, in a sustainable fashion.

The rest of this report identifies the strengths of the town, the main barrier to transformation the Expert found, as well as clear recommendations the Local Authority and partners can action now to accelerate the transformation process. The report ends with a list of High Streets Task Force Products that the Expert has prescribed.

On behalf of the High Streets Task Force, may I take this opportunity to thank attendees who gave up their time to attend the meeting, and who contributed to a frank and positive discussion. Thank you to Jennifer Dixon and Shirley Williams and the rest of the Town Team for organising the session and those that led, and contributed to, an informative and well-planned town tour.

From reading the feedback from the visit, and this report, I can see you have a lot going for you in Newquay – and many strengths both in the town and in your people. The High Streets Task Force is here to help you build on those strengths, and I hope you find it useful.



Simon Quin

Executive Director High Streets Task Force

## Newquay – Strengths

- ✓ Low vacancy rates
- ✓ Strong array of independents
- ✓ Evidence of recent commercial investment in the town
- ✓ Immediate access to beautiful natural assets
- ✓ Strong visitor and tourism economy
- ✓ Successful small business incubator scheme
- ✓ Evidence of emerging partnership working
- ✓ Evidence of community engagement
- ✓ A positive, place-focussed digital sentiment picture (from Maybe\* data in HSTF dashboard)

Newquay is a very attractive town, which boasts a strong tourism economy during the summer months. It has the footfall signature of a ‘holiday town’<sup>1</sup>. Its close proximity to the beach makes it an ideal location for holidaymakers, with multiple attractions, such as the zoo, aquarium and cinema, complementing its many natural assets and their associated activities. There is a strong culture of independents and evidence of recent commercial investment which shows that, despite the economic impact of the coronavirus, confidence in Newquay’s economy remains high.

Further evidence of Newquay’s strong post-Covid performance can be found in their footfall figures which, in July 2021, saw an 11% increase when compared to the same period in 2019. Whilst some of this can be attributed to the ‘staycation’ trend that has swept the UK as a result of holidaymakers being prevented from travelling abroad, it is worth noting that towns across the South West saw a 25.8% decrease in footfall during the same period and the average UK ‘holiday’ town also saw a 11.8% decrease. This clearly indicates that Newquay is an attractive, compelling destination for visitors which is markedly outperforming both nearby towns and the average UK holiday destination.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://squidex.mkmaps.com/api/assets/ipm/footfall-a-key-performance-indicator.pdf>

# 4Rs Framework and our method

The aim of the Unlocking Your Place Potential workshop is for our High Streets Task Force Experts to identify the key barrier(s) to the improvement of your high street and recommend an appropriate strategic response. To enable our experts to do this in an evidence-based way, the High Streets Task Force uses its '4Rs Framework'.

Research has identified 237 factors that impact on the success of the high street. However, it is too overwhelming to think of all these at once, so we have developed the '4 Rs' framework to provide some structure to the incredibly complex practice of place transformation. Without a framework, it is easy to be drawn into so much detail that you cannot see the big picture.

When you simplify the process of renewal, the reasons why so many regeneration plans do not result in the changes people expect fall into 4 categories:

- The problems facing the Town Centre were not accurately identified
- The plans were good but not enough changed
- The place changed but people's perceptions did not
- There were fundamental issues with governance or the spatial layout of the place

We looked at these problems across the UK and identified 4 strategies to address them, *repositioning*, *reinventing*, *rebranding*, and *restructuring*. So, the framework distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (repositioning), effecting change (reinventing), communication (rebranding) and governance/spatial planning (restructuring). More detail on each of the '4Rs' is set out below.

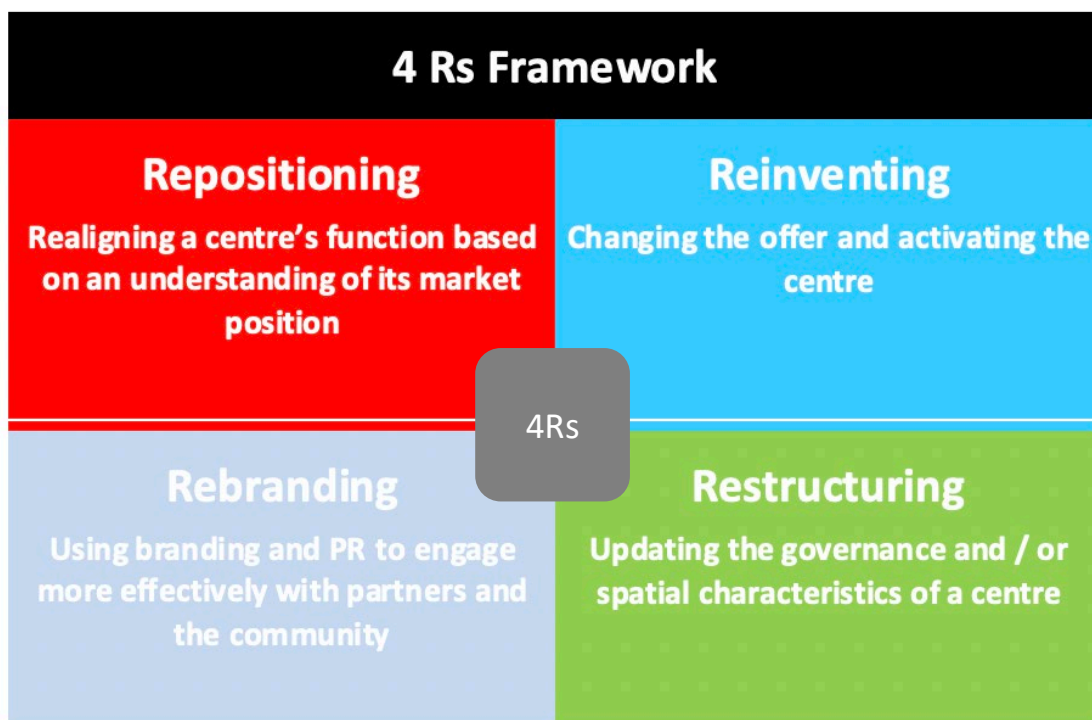


Figure 1: 4Rs Framework

Although the town and its people have many strengths, we did identify a number of weaknesses. We have grouped these using the 4Rs framework – see below.

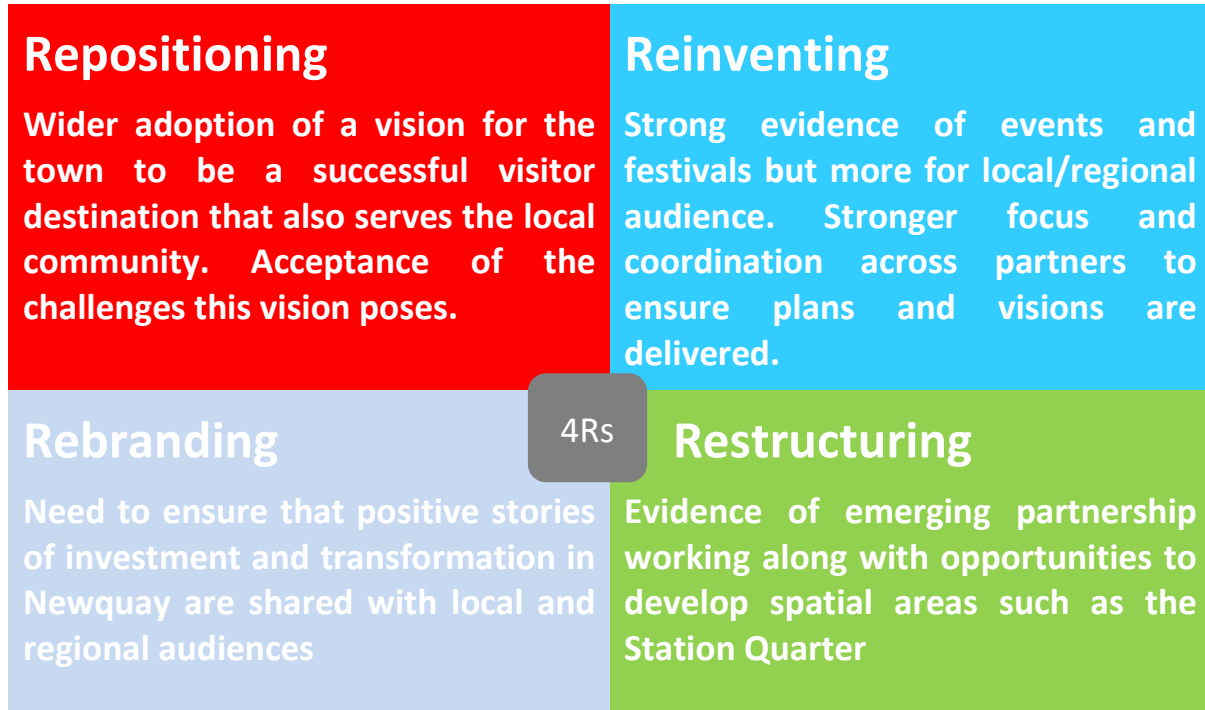


Figure 1: 4Rs Framework

We used all the information we had to identify which of the descriptions above fitted the evidence we had collected. We collected this evidence from looking at your strategic documents, the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, including our meeting, discussions, exercises and the town tour. We also included the information we found out about Newquay from our desk research.

We then grouped each piece of evidence under the 4R headings of Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding, and Restructuring.

By classifying every clue, we could see how these are grouped and where Newquay is facing major barriers. This then allows us to recommend suitable strategies to overcome these. These strategies are *ways of working*, rather than ‘magic bullets’ relating to any particular intervention in your town.

As mentioned at the start of the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, you are the experts in Newquay. You can see the major barriers to your transformation in the next section.

# Fishbone Analysis

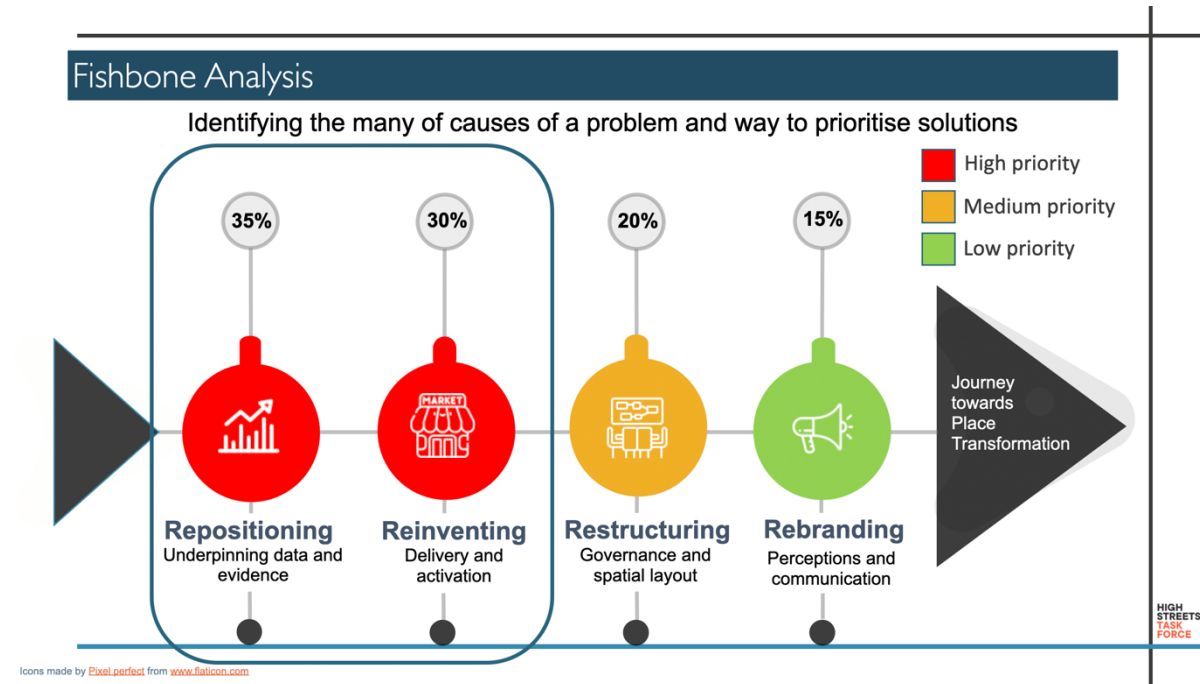


Figure 2: Fishbone Analysis

The aim of the Fishbone is to help you understand the underlying causes or barriers to transformation in your place. The idea is to capture problems and present them back in a prioritised manner, so you are aware of what needs to be tackled first. Having completed our desk-based research and Town Tour, we identified “Repositioning” as your main priority, followed by “Reinventing”, then “Restructuring” and finally “Rebranding”.

Newquay needs to prioritise repositioning; a shared understanding of the challenges facing the town and associated with evolving into a successful visitor destination that also serves the needs of the local community, in a sustainable fashion. Follow that up quite solidly with reinventing, putting plans into action, before restructuring, finessing the governance/spatial layout and delivery to suit the change momentum achieved, and finally, rebranding, getting the message out about your positive place transformation.

**Repositioning:** As you may recall, the desk-based research highlighted that the Lower Layer Super Output Area for Newquay town centre suffers from high levels of deprivation across a number of important areas. This includes being in the top 10% of deprivation for Employment, Crime, Health and Living Environment, and being in the top 20% for Income deprivation. Usually, we would only list high deprivation as one factor, however, as we have no THYS [this is your high street report] or EO1 to gather clues from, we’ve listed each one as its own ‘clue’. Whilst this may “overweight” the category, I believe it is important that the high-levels of deprivation across a range of IMD factors in Newquay are given enough of a focus in our recommendations.

Further ‘clues’ in the repositioning category include that, according to the Centre for Towns, Newquay has the highest proportion of people employed in the accommodation sector (26%) of any



town or city in the country, the highest percentage of its workforce exposed to coronavirus of any town across the country (56.2%) and is ranked the 6<sup>th</sup> most socially isolated town in the country. There is also the unaffordability and unavailability of housing, especially for a local workforce. We heard about this on the trip and a quick search on Zoopla around the time for our visit found very few properties available to rent nearby.

# Diagnosis of main barrier to transformation

**As a result of the diagnostic process, the Experts have identified repositioning as the main barrier to transformation in Newquay. Newquay has a very strong seasonal economy and whilst this is economically beneficial, it can easily overshadow the importance of the town to the local community – and make it difficult to pursue strategies to make the town more liveable and sustainable in the longer term.**

Although Newquay boasts a strong visitor economy in the summer months, we believe that more can be done to reposition its offer during the off-season winter months in order to deliver a more compelling and attractive offer all year round.

For example, in April 2021, footfall was 45% down in Newquay when compared to figures in 2019. Whilst many places across the country have suffered reductions in footfall due to the impact of the coronavirus, when compared to the rest of the South West during this period, Newquay is a further 10% down. This shows that other parts of the region are more resilient during this time of year. Therefore, becoming more appealing as a destination, particularly for local and regional visitors, during the off-season months should become a priority.

The aim is to consciously flatten the demand curve (pushing demand to edge/out of season) as during the peak summer weeks the incredibly high volume of footfall puts a lot of pressure on the town's infrastructure and the ability of businesses to service this demand. The widespread adoption of the aim to become a successful visitor destination which also serves the needs of the local community, in a sustainable fashion should help the Town Team and its partners align on immediate and longer term plans and strategies that have a more collective and positive impact on the future of the town and its surrounding community.

Consideration should also be paid to how these visitors arrive into Newquay. We understand that a trial park and ride scheme was successfully run in August 2021 with over 40,000 passengers using this across the 6 week period it operated. This should be considered for future years along with the potential of a park and rail option. It was during the town tour, that our team noticed the area needing the most attention was the Station Quarter. Although passenger numbers are currently low, it is potentially one of the main gateways to Newquay in the medium to long-term, and its built environment reflects poorly on the rest of the town centre.

From our town tour, it was also clear that Newquay has good partnerships in place and features a wide variety of impressive independent retailers. In order to attract more regional visitors, however, we would recommend that more is done to assess how Newquay communicates the strength of its offer to a wider Cornish audience.

During our conversations, it was clear that there is still a perception with the wider public that Newquay is predominantly a 'party town'. Whilst much has already been done to pivot the offer away from this and towards a more discerning visitor profile of couples and families, this is perhaps not being best communicated to the local Cornish public. This doesn't require the rollout of an

expensive national PR campaign, but instead some targeted good news stories told from the perspectives of residents, businesses and visitors featuring their success and the experiences that the town has to offer throughout the whole year.

We were impressed with the recent renovation of the Killacourt to make the space more accessible for visitors and provide opportunities for small businesses to operate in an affordable way. However, we would recommend that support is provided to these businesses in order to help them scale up their operations and transition to the empty units on the high street. This in itself would be a great story to promote and would demonstrate the benefits of having a retail eco-system in place which provides an accessible starting point for new or emerging small-scale businesses before they take the step to invest in a high street location.

Whilst overall vacancy rates are low in the town, this may mask discrepancies across different types and scales of units, so more understanding of the size and other features of vacant properties (e.g. ownership, quality, frontage etc.) would help manage the pipeline in a more proactive way.

It was very clear from our meeting that there is a huge amount of enthusiasm and support for the town from Cornwall Council, Newquay Town Council, BID and the local community. More frequent and open communication between all partners will benefit your efforts to drive positive change in Newquay and we would recommend that regular updates and discussions, facilitated through the Town Team, continue to take place in order drive forward your plans for improvement.

# Recommendations

To unlock the potential of Newquay, we are recommending a strategy of **repositioning**, with the aim of becoming a model for sustainable destination towns, across the country – in other words a town that continues to attract and delight visitors whilst being liveable, sustainable and viable for residents and local businesses. We understand it is not easy for towns that have a strong visitor economy to address the wider challenges they face, so we are giving you six recommendations that if you adopt, will lead to significant improvements.

1. Share the final version of this report with everyone that attended the Unlocking Your Place Potential meeting and other senior staff within Cornwall County, Newquay Town Council and Newquay BID.
2. Adopt the simple (but ambitious) aim of redefining the function of Newquay as a destination town – one that is liveable, sustainable and viable to residents while still continuing to attract and delight visitors. Use events, branding and PR to widely communicate the aim and ensure the town team and other partners identify how their work/investment/activity etc. contributes to this aim.
3. Identify, share and communicate the major challenges facing the town that impede its transition to a successful year-round holiday destination that meets the needs of its local catchment in a sustainable fashion. Ensure these challenges are widely communicated and understood by delivery partners – and that all plans and activity are assessed to show how they tackle these challenges (assess the impact they will have). Challenges should be a mixture of those that can be addressed in the short-term and longer term, and of varying sizes and cost to maximise the potential for private and public financing opportunities.
4. Keep a database of properties to understand (and manage) usage, tenancy and vacancy more effectively.
5. Develop a management and measurement matrix to show the progress you are making towards meeting your aim and tackling your challenges. This should also link back to showing who is responsible for what.
6. Develop a template for ensuring the aim and challenges can be easily ‘baked into’ Newquay local development plans – this should be done in partnership with Cornwall Council. Use the Station Quarter as a worked example?

A couple of additional recommendations which sit outside of the Repositioning strategy:

7. A local/regional PR campaign to reposition the town for families, couples and water sports/outdoors activity seekers including the outdoor creative and culture offering.
8. A business buddying or mentoring scheme (covering green and blue technologies and creatives) to manage a pipeline of businesses from incubation (such as the Killacourt, CSpace and other work-hubs throughout the town) onto the high street.

We hope these recommendations are useful. As we explained in the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, you are the experts in Newquay, not us.

Nevertheless, we have experience of working with many towns around the country that face similar challenges – so when we undertake a diagnostic visit we are well trained in looking for strengths and weaknesses in the town's offer, as well as the structures and processes that manage and change a town.

# High Streets Task Force Product Prescription

Based on our recommendations, we would like to offer you the following products. This has been decided after considering your key barriers to transformation and what we have concluded as the best way to help you achieve your transformation goals.

## High Streets Task Force Products Prescribed:

Product prescribed	Rationale
<b>Expert support or Mentor support</b>	<p>Further detail regarding this support can be found in the attached product summary/guidance documentation.</p> <p>Expert – someone on hand to design activities for first five recommendations. Who can also run/facilitate workshops etc.</p> <p>Mentor – someone on hand to help them implement the first five recommendations. Who can also run/facilitate workshops etc.</p>
<b>Workshop</b>	<p>I have recommended that following the above Expert or Mentor support, Newquay would benefit from a Place Making Programme workshop (to agree challenges and ensure widespread adoption of aim). The above Expert/Mentor visit will be an opportunity to further discuss this product with you, to ensure that it is something that you will benefit from. If during the Expert/Mentor visit the need for the workshop is agreed, arrangements will begin to put this in place, and further guidance supplied.</p>
<b>Online learning/resources</b>	<p><b>Developing Place Analysts – online training:</b> This training course, run by HSTF partner Springboard, will upskill practitioners in understanding how data can benefit users in the place management industry. <i>To put yourself or a colleague forward for this training, please complete our <a href="#">online form</a>.</i></p> <p><b>Repositioning: developing collaborative, inspiring visions that achieve change</b> – this webinar helps place leaders consider their local vision, how this can be formed most effectively, and how it can impact the transformation of high streets. <a href="#">You can view this online</a></p>

	<p><a href="#">resource here.</a></p> <p><b>Unlocking High Streets through Public and Private Collaboration</b> – this webinar focuses on collaboration on high streets, particularly on what lessons can be learnt from the past and what new models need to be adopted to meet the current challenges. <a href="#">You can view this online resource here.</a></p>
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**Next steps:**

Please liaise with your Operations contact to make arrangements for the delivery of the next stage of your support. The Operation team are available to assist with any queries relating to the delivery of the above support, so please do not hesitate to get in touch if any aspect is unclear. More information about all of these products can be found on the HSTF website [here](#).

# Appendix 1 – List of town attendees

<u>Name</u>	<u>Role</u>
Dr Steve Millington	Director of IPM and academic lead for HSTF
Tom Hindmarch	Membership Co-Ordinator and Events Lead IPM
Matthew Davis	Communications Lead HSTF, Content and Marketing Manager IPM
Joe Barratt	Junior Fellow IPM, Co -Founder of Teenage Market
Daniel Morrell	Videographer
Jennifer Dixon	Host/Speaker for Newquay Town Team/ RIBA Client Advisor to Town Team (resident as well)
Louis Gardner	Mayor of Newquay and Central Newquay Cornwall Councillor, Chair of Economic Development Committee.
Andy Curtis	Town Clerk and Chief Executive Newquay Town Council
Michelle Johns	Chair of Community and Tourism Committee, Newquay Town Council
Andy Hannan	Chair of Environment and Facilities Committee, Newquay Town Council
Anna Druce	Community Link Officer for Cornwall Council
Stephen Facer	Town Renewal Officer and Cornwall Council Economic Growth and Development point of contact
Carla Lewis	Bid Manager
Kim Harris	Bid Manager (maternity cover)
Dirk Parker	Gym Owner and Developer
Jon Goodman	Chair of The Central Ward Residents' Association (voluntary and resident)
Leigh Archer	Town Team HSTF, Cream Cornwall (retail)



Len Sheppard	Chair of Newquay Old Cornwall Society, Co-ordinator for Newquay Community Museum, Vice Chair of Celtic Congress Cornwall and the Cornish Heritage reporter for the Newquay Voice
Shirley Williams	Town Team Co-ordinator