


#ILove Portland

— A public consultation focused on the Isle of Portland's 'loveability' and the key opportunities and challenges for b-side & its stakeholders to build resilience in 2019 and beyond.

Prepared for b-side CIC by
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The content of this report is intended to be a contribution to building the resilience of b-side as arts organisation on the isle of Portland and to identify future directions for its geo-tourism strategy and fund-raising initiatives. The material presented herein and the views expressed were produced through a consultation process which consisted of a series of workshops with local residents, businesses, charities, government and other organisations. The text represents the interpretation of the findings and the views of the authors and should not be regarded as representing the collective views of b-side or their funders. Compiling of this report was done with the utmost care. However, the authors and the organisations they represent are not liable for any damage resulting from the information provided in this publication.

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About b-side

B-side is an arts organisation established in 2008 and based in Dorset (b-side, 2019a). It both commissions and works with artists to produce site-specific and site-responsive work. In addition to producing a festival held every two years, it has a year round programme of activities in the Weymouth and Portland Area. These work with a wide range of communities, artists, young people, and organisations (b-side, 2019b). B-side is now eleven years old. Its rapid growth, the expanding range of its activity and the significance of its contribution to the local area over those 11 years are shining testament to the team who work at its creative, community and business heart.

Rationale & Background

#ILovePortland looks to identify paths that may aid the capacity of b-side to amplify its value. B-side is both a celebrant and a creator of art and community activity to celebrate the unique, beautiful and historically significant Isle of Portland. Funding support from Arts Council England, this “Lovability” project employed the skills of Dr Nicole Ferdinand¹ and Dr Martin Robertson² in a consultation process with representatives of communities with whom b-side CIC live and work. These communities are, respectively, the residents, artists and local organisations. Through this consultation a positive forward and resilient trajectory could be better established in the minds and actions of these b-side communities and other stakeholders. Over a two-day period, consultation with residents and local organisations (which included artists) offered each group a constructive environment in which to give deep consideration of what it is that makes Portland so special to each of them, and to then consider what they feel could be the best and worst of future outcomes for Portland.

¹ Nicole’s work with the King’s Cultural Institute focused on engagement of cultural organisations and community stakeholders and the utilisation of scenario planning to forward the growth and reach of festivals (Postma, Ferdinand & Gouthro, 2013).

² Martin’s work stems from operational and managerial involvement in, as well as consultation for, festivals and other event types in the UK and Australia. He takes a critical approach to examining the issues in festival and events management (Robertson et al., 2018).

The groups of residents and local organisations who were consulted formed consensus as to what they would like maintained and improved, i.e. what they love, and also what it is that they see as threatening and which has to be managed. Unlike the term 'Liveability' that is used by national and international agencies to indicate to outsiders why a place is worth investing in, we have purposefully used the term 'Lovability'. Lovability is a multi-functioning and forward facing state. It first looks outward from the position of the communities rather than inward from external investors or visitors. Portland Lovability is a title to describe a sense of ownership and belief in Portland which includes but also transcends a sense of belonging, and deep affection. It, like true and enduring love, is about collective resilience, i.e agreeing and forming future direction; and working together where adaption is required to ensure success – and thus to not fear change.



To focus on the things that they loved about Portland the resident participants wrote short stories/ vignettes, highlighting what they felt most important about the place. See Figure 1. The key words from their stories are highlighted below. Participants also picked the key words highlighted from their stories. They wrote these on post-its and used 3 stickers that they were given, to vote for their favourite ones. See Table 1.

Figure 1: Portland 'loves' highlighted by participants' Portland stories



Table 1: Top Portland Loves voted on by the public

Number of votes from the group	Portland Loves	Number of votes from the group	Portland Loves
40	Nature/the sea/landscape ³	4	Portlanders
10	Tranquility	4	Pride
7	Folklore/stories	2	Prison
5	Storms	2	Stone

³ This Portland ‘love’ is an amalgamation of ‘loves’ which reference some aspect of the natural environment. This accounts for the large numbers of votes for this single item.

⁴ ‘Public services’ is an issue amalgamated from all public services issues mentioned (e.g. garbage pick-up, buses, schools, roads, lack of bins, etc.)

⁵ ‘Environment’ is an issue amalgamated from all the environmental issues mentioned (e.g garbage on beaches, changing weather patterns, etc.)

Portland issues and opportunities

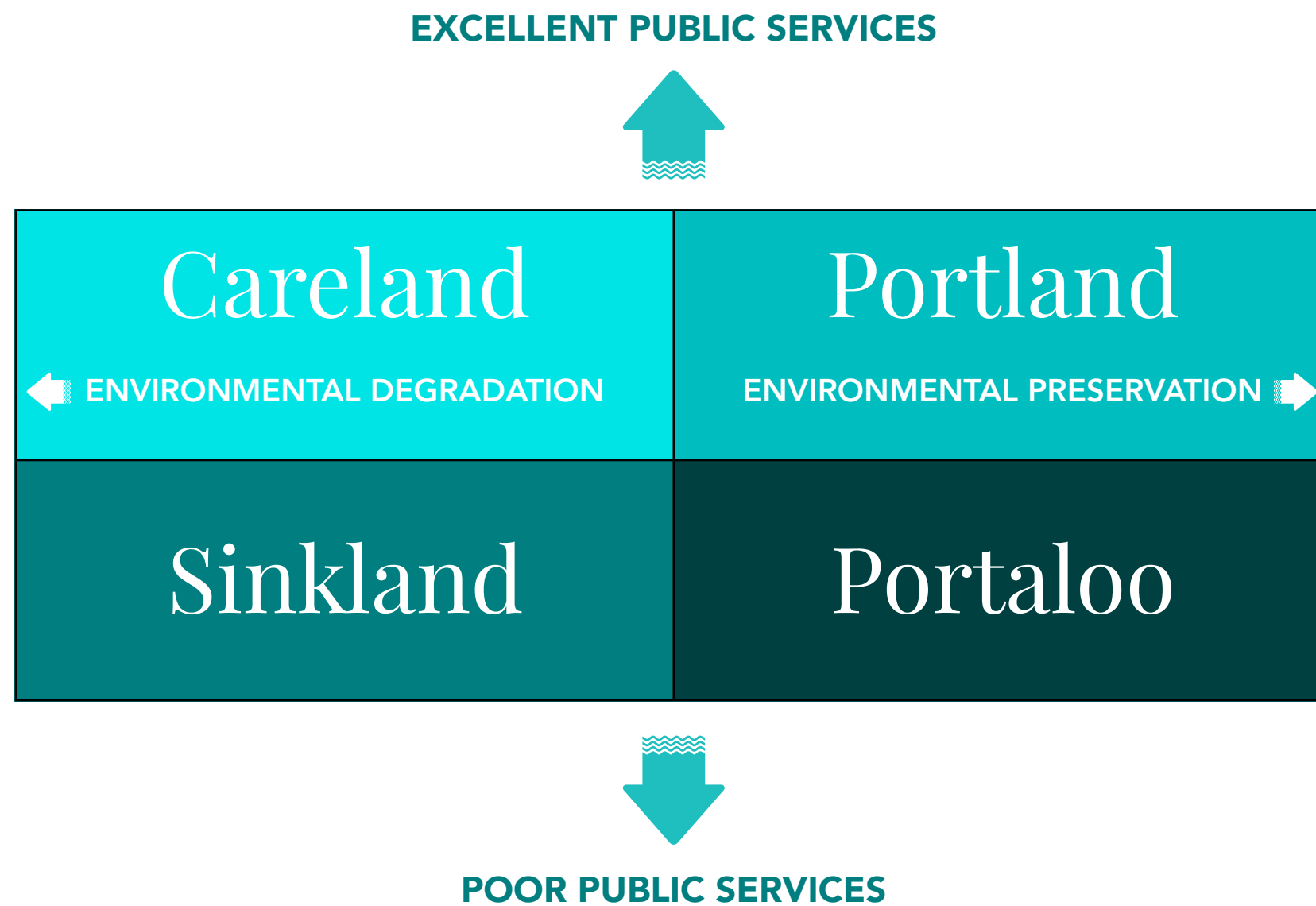
Table 2 summarises the environmental issues and opportunities discussed by the group via group discussion and the voting method described above.


Table 2: Issues and Opportunities Voted on by participating organisations

Number of votes from the group	Top Issues and opportunities	Number of votes from the group	Top Issues and opportunities
22	Public services ⁴	6	Amenities
14	Environment ⁵	4	Community spirit
10	Tourism	3	Central website
6	Parking	2	Affordable housing
6	Youth	2	Internet connectivity

Future scenarios for Portland

Figure 2: Future Scenarios for Portland





Scenario planning has been used for many years as a strategic tool with which to determine a preferred forward direction. To varying degrees, the many forms of scenario planning encourages a democratic process to facilitate agreed future directions. Criticism has been made of them, however, because of the multitude of techniques that are applied and because of the number of consultations which, in using expert knowledge, do not empower the respondents of the information. Accordingly, any consensus that emerges often becomes difficult to take forward without frequent reemployment of the consultant. B-side has endeavoured to give the community capacity to take forward the output of the consultation, i.e. give the community capacity to make sense of the 'now' and, through their involvement 'learn by doing'. This way the workshop participants were more able to work together to determine what future they want. This is to say, they were empowered to think in such a way as to affect the future in a manner that encourages resilience. Accordingly if conditions change – whether these be economic, social or environmental - this ability to think forward encourages community adaptability.

Scenarios are possible visions of the future, whereas these visions are not predictions they are meant to plausible alternatives of what could happen in the future. Scenarios were developed using the input from the consultation process. They were developed

out of the top two community issues/opportunities that Isle of Portland presents for their business, government, charitable, artistic and other organisations. According to workshop participants, these were public services and physical environment, respectively. Under public services, aspects that were considered to be vital to the organisations participating in the consultation were the bus service (considered to be working well) and waste management (considered to be lacking). For workshop participants, the condition of the physical environment was considered to be a key driver of potential development and also an area of vulnerability. Issues identified included, climate change and also pollution from littering and other sources.

The best case scenario was described simply as "Portland" and the worst case scenario was described as "Sinkland". The two other scenarios were labelled "Careland" and "Portaloo" which were the scenarios in which either the environment or public services are neglected. See Figure 2.

The details for the scenarios were derived from the aspects of Portland which were voted as most loved by participants.

Table 4: Scenarios Developed from the Consultation Process

Scenarios	Descriptions
Careland	Careland is a future in which Portland suffers environmental damage but greatly improves its public services. In such a scenario, Portland maintains the good public services it does have, such as its buses, and also improves facilities it does not have, such as GPs, roads, waste collection and youth services. Although changes in the climate, combined with pollution has meant that the destination is not as attractive as it once was, it is still tranquil and there is a strong sense of community. This makes it an ideal place for families with young children and older people looking for a quiet, comfortable and safe neighbourhood.
Portland	Portland is the best case scenario. This is one in which both the environment is preserved and public services improve. As with the Careland scenario, families with young children and older people find the island an ideal location to settle in, due to both the high level of public services and its scenic beauty. Not surprisingly, the destination is also attractive to tourists interested in the destination's historic sites, oral history and natural environment. This in turn develops into a thriving tourism sector which brings jobs and significant public and private investment.
Sinkland	Sinkland is the worse case scenario for Portland. There is environmental damage as well as a significant decline in public services. Young people and families begin to move away because the public service provision has declined. The sense of community disappears as more people move away. However, as the location becomes more sparsely populated and climate change leads to more extreme weather, the location becomes attractive to visitors seeking isolation and the stormy weather. Niche forms of tourism around historic sites such as the prison and the quarries could be developed by private providers. The folklore/stories of the island can be used to augment these tourism products.
Portaloo	Portaloo is a scenario in which public services decline but the environment is preserved. In such a scenario, the community comes together to ensure the environment is maintained but there are some public services which suffer substantially, for example, the public infrastructure such as roads, schools and transportation network. Public sector investment in tourism is minimal, creating opportunities for private sector to step up and develop unique leisure products around the destination's natural beauty. However, without public sector involvement these initiatives are likely to be uncoordinated and could benefit from a central coordinating body.



Recommendations

Scenario planning builds resilience because it encourages organisations to plan for a range of eventualities rather than planning for just one outcome. The following recommendations can be deployed in the event of any of the four scenarios described.

1. Development of a geotourism strategy

Geotourism, a term used to describe a form of tourism that should compliment and sustain the current geographic qualities of the location in which it occurs, is a developmental strategy that transcends all four scenarios that came out of the consultation process. It is a strategy that can be implemented regardless of the state of the environment and public services. This strategy sustains or enhances the distinctive geographical character of a place. Portland in addition to its scenic natural environment, has historic sites and a rich folklore, each of the aspects on its own can be exploited through an effective geotourism strategy. This strategy can also be exploited with or without substantial investment from the public sector. However, it will be difficult for individual tourism initiatives to develop into a cohesive strategy without a coordinating body, a role which is normally performed by a public sector organisation such as a local council. In the event of declining public sector funding, a non-governmental sector organisation or group such of organisations could play such a role.

2. Development of a geotourism alliance

Development of an alliance of organisations which combines public, private, charitable and other types of organisations to serve as a coordinating body would be an important first step in implementing a geotourism strategy. This alliance would be a source of resilience because no single organisation will be responsible for driving the strategy forward. However, B-side, an arts organisation with experience in geotourism projects that has worked with a range of organisations such as councils, local businesses, charities and schools is well placed to take a leading role in such an initiative. B-side has a significant history in Portland and the response to the public consultation demonstrated that residents as well as other stakeholders see B-side as a pillar in the community. Thus the organisation is well placed to play such a role.



3. Youth training and skills development

Youth training and skills development must be a priority for any destination seeking to develop resilience in the long-term. However, as noted by the workshop participants, Portland is currently lacking in education and training opportunities for young people. The lack of a secondary school which offers A' Levels (the most common qualifications used to access university education in the United Kingdom) was also noted as a disincentive for families with young children to either settle in and/or stay on the island. Recently, Weymouth and Portland's⁶ last 'good' secondary school was rated 'inadequate' by Ofsted (WeyPAW, 2018). Weymouth and Portland also has a smaller percentage of children between the ages of 0-15 in its population, when compared to the national average (16.3% as compared with 19.1%) (Dorset council, 2019). These challenges highlight a significant opportunity to facilitate training and skills development in vocational and creative subjects which are often not offered by more traditional academic providers. B-side, as well as the many organisations that participated in the consultation can explore options as how this could be provided. Apprenticeships, internships and educational/business/industry partnerships are all approaches that can be explored to provide youth training and skills development opportunities.

4. Working with Portland's older population

The previous section highlights the challenge Portland is facing retaining its younger population. However, like the county in which it resides it has a population which is older than the national average. Weymouth and Portland's over 65s account for 25.4% of its population as opposed to the national average of 18.3% (Dorset Council, 2019). These individuals can be a substantial resource in terms of skills, time and energy and also through financial input. Portland's older population can therefore get involved with addressing some of the concerns raised during the consultation. B-side can act as a coordinating body to organise the efforts of these individuals. Possibilities to be explored include: the training and development of the skills of the older population to facilitate their contribution to youth training and skills development; inviting them to participate in artistic projects with a local/ environmental focus, and encouraging them to donate to b-side projects which tackle community concerns.

⁶ Weymouth is combined with Portland to make up the district and borough in the county of Dorset in the United Kingdom (UK). Key national statistics in the UK are usually calculated at the district/borough level.

List of consultation participants

B-side would sincerely like to thank the consultation participants for generously giving their time and energy to the #ILovePortland project. They included:

1. Jennie Allberry, Portland Permaculture
2. Georgina Bolt, 10 Shots
3. Maria Carter, Penn Castle
4. Susan Cocking, Deputy Mayor
5. Carol Cruickshank, Artway Open for Art
6. Mike Deadman, Heights Hotel
7. Ian Dyke, Artist
8. Andrea Frankham-Hughes, Jeweller/
Volunteer Coordinator
9. Nikki Fryer, Singer/Mum
10. Katherine Garcia, Councillor, Dorset County Council
11. Elizabeth Hardy, Retired/Museum Curator
12. Lyn Kirkland, Whitestones Café
13. Podi Lawrence, Self-employed artist
14. Anne Link, Member of Island Voices Choir
15. Rob Link, Member of Island Voices Choir
16. Sam Lloyd, Air B 'n' B Owner
17. Eileen Meara, Resident
18. David Nichols, Whitestones Café
19. Holly Norris, Artist
20. Tom Playle, Retired teacher
21. Sally Robinson, Penn Castle
22. Cat Samuel, Penn Castle
23. Hazel Sheridan, Lady Pop
24. Alison Smith, Eden Project
25. Jane Urquhart-Simms, Rotary Club of Island & Royal
Manor of Portland
26. Lucy Watkins, Musician/Filmmaker
27. Stephen Yates, Artist

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B-side is an arts organisation based in Dorset, UK. We work with and commission artists to make new site-responsive work revealing the marginal , often forgotten and less commercial aspects of our coastal towns and communities. We invite professional artists to make artworks in response to place: often drawing upon the history, architecture and geography of a particular site or working with communities as a source of inspiration and research.



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