Plymouth really is an amazing place

Situated in the most beautiful location imaginable, and surrounded by the ocean to the south, and lovely countryside to the west, east and north, this is a city that has always been defined by its physical position.

It boasts one of the three largest deep-water harbours in the world, alongside Sydney and San Francisco.

Plymouth’s history is rich, and driven by the access it provides to the sea. And therefore to the rest of the world. So it has always been a point of departure, and also a point of entry. With Drake, Hawkins and Raleigh, and the Mayflower all major elements of the 16th and 17th century story still talked about four centuries on.

There is still much to see from that period; just walk down New Street on a summer’s evening. Or stand on the Hoe, and gaze out to sea just as Drake did as the Armada approached.

Of course, this isn’t just about the 16th and 17th centuries. So much has happened since. We all know about the city’s strategic importance as a naval port, we know about Captain Cook, we know about Scott, we know about Darwin.

And we know about the brilliance and resilience of the people of Plymouth throughout the second world war, epitomised by the weekend dances on the Hoe, and the rallying around the word Resurgam – “we shall rise again”.

Tinside Pool looking out on to the Sound
Looking forward

Heritage is not just about the past, it’s about the future – not just through the physicality of the place, but also in the way the spirit lives on.

There is a unique Plymouth personality. It’s characterised by openness (reflecting the physicality of the place), entrepreneurship, toughness, resilience – and pride.

However, the latter can all too often be passive, and a little muted.

The brand proposition must help re-in-stil and sustain a sense of pride worthy of the city’s past and future throughout the community. Citizens, visitors, partners, investors and students alike.

And then there are our values. Of which the primary three are tolerance (driven by centuries of welcoming people from elsewhere), integrity and respect.

Finally, the experience that Plymouth delivers is both authentic and elemental.

New Yorkers rightly claim that the view from Brooklyn Bridge over to Manhatten is one of the most iconic traveller experiences in the western world.

Many people feel that the view out to sea from the Hoe matches that in terms of impact.

So in summary - there’s nowhere quite like Plymouth.

We must promote the city with real pride, and in a way that communicates complete confidence.
A great past; a thrilling future too

21st century Plymouth is a great place to be.
There’s a lot to see, and loads to do.

There are countless brilliant permanent offerings, such as the National Marine Aquarium, the Theatre Royal, the Life Centre, Drake Circus.

And the city is a centre for world-class events, like the America’s Cup, which visited in 2011, or the 2013 Rolex Fastnet, or the annual British Fireworks Championships.

2020 will see the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower. A year in which Plymouth will be able to claim with justification that it is the birthplace of modern America.

The city has a burgeoning cultural scene, as good and as varied as anywhere outside the capital.

For all of its history and heritage, Plymouth feels youthful, and vibrant. It’s a magnet for bright young people. There’s a buzz about the place, particularly on the Barbican, and at Royal William Yard.

And there’s also a thriving food sector. Enabled in part by the quality of the produce we can source from the sea locally, and driven by creativity and passion.

Plymouth is a great place to learn, with excellent schools and two fine universities.

And it’s the perfect place to make a career – and enjoy a work-life balance unmatched by the vast majority of other cities.

So it’s a very special place. And it’s a place with genuine global resonance – there are more than 50 Plymouths scattered around the world.

There’s nowhere quite like Plymouth.
What the new strategic brand is for

It’s to bring Plymouth to the fore once more.

To make the people who live here really proud of the place – and to create the conditions in which more and more people are stimulated to come here.

Whether it’s to visit, live, study, invest, work, shop, play, eat and drink.

Or indeed all of the above.

Ultimately, its purpose is to secure competitive advantage for Plymouth. In all the sectors in which it competes.

So let’s take a closer look at that new strategic brand for Plymouth.

But before we get to talk about logos and fonts and the like, we need to take a look at the thinking behind “Britain’s Ocean City”.

And how we can all play our part in making it work.
How all this started

In geopolitical terms, things have moved along a lot in recent years.
There’s been a massive shift towards the need for global credentials for any great city.
Regional relevance alone no longer cuts it.
Competitors are definitely getting their act together – some with real success.
One example with particular resonance for Plymouth – the work that Portsmouth has done in positioning themselves as “the great waterfront city”.
And from a “consumer” point of view, there have been some big moves.
The impact of digital communications – making it so much easier to live and work far from the traditional centres of population.
Leading to more and more people actively seeking better-balanced lifestyles.
Also the ever-increasing importance of “authenticity” as a driver of choice.
Plymouth has really moved on too

So many great things have happened – across all the sectors.
Plymouth can compete.
If it pulls together and speaks with one voice, it can win more than its fair share - in every sector in which it operates.
And Plymouth has a truly amazing cv.
Built on an entirely unique back-story which in turn has fed its unique DNA.
It’s incredibly well set for the future – in a global context.
And there are many great stories to tell.
Stories that work on the rational level; and stories that work on the emotions.
(The classic ingredients of great brands, which impact on both head and heart)
So let’s start shouting from the rooftops about how great a city we have.
So how did we get to “Britain’s Ocean City”

There has been a lot of great strategic thinking done on how to reach the best possible brand proposition for Plymouth, and it goes back ten years.

David Mackay, the world-famous architect, concluded in 2005 that “Plymouth benefits from an extraordinary waterside setting….it needs to follow cities like Genoa and Liverpool and re-establish its credentials on a world stage”.

Brand Architecture International, a New York specialist agency, recommended in 2007 that it was for the city to reclaim its former status as a city of the world. “Plymouth once occupied an eminent place on the world map. To do so again, it must turn back to face the sea, and re-embrace its maritime culture. A point of origin and a point of open exchange”

Lloyd Northover in 2010 noted that “there is a clear lack of civic confidence, yet so much to be proud of. And no-one believes in something that does not believe in itself”

And Blue Sail wrote a 2012 vision which talked about the city’s opportunity establish itself as a “world-leading marine city”.

All of this work was reviewed in the context of where we are now.

And a checklist of requirements for the new brand proposition was developed.

- Relevant across all of our many and varied audiences
- Something with genuine global resonance (because that is where we compete)
- Capable of supporting all we do in promoting the city
- And also of working as a backdrop in preparation for Mayflower 2020
- Build from the unique DNA and personality of Plymouth – and Plymothians
- Future-proof. No need to change..
- And work at both rational and emotional levels.

Rationally, place us back where we deserve to be – on the world stage.

Emotionally, engage and inspire. Tonally, reflect real pride and confidence. And “be Plymouth”.

British Firework Championships
Marine Building, Plymouth University
MTV Crashes Plymouth
Plymouth’s waterfront
Hence “Britain’s Ocean City”.
But why “Ocean”?

Rationally – USP’s
- History, heritage, DNA
- Strategic focus
- Future aspirations
- Places us in Global context
- Lifestyle appeal
- Location becomes positive
- Ours to own
- Platform for 2020

Emotionally – ESP’s
- Life giving, life enhancing
- Deep, Expansive
- Dynamic
- Rich and Diverse
- Culturally rich
- Eternal
- Aspirational
- Inspirational
So how do we deploy “Britain’s Ocean City”?  

It’s a new kind of brand.

Plymouth is different, and our brand will be different – and owned not by a tiny group of design specialists, but by each and every Plymothian.

It’s our brand. It’s the new City Vision.

And it’s not a claim, it’s a statement of fact. It’s the truth about Plymouth.

Much more than just a logo, Britain’s Ocean City is an underpinning narrative.

That sounds like jargon, because it is.

So perhaps a better way of putting it would be to describe our new brand proposition as the foundation upon which everything we say about Plymouth is built.

And not just what we say – as far as possible, it’s what we do as well.

Because brands are essentially much more about what you do than what you say.

They are about deeds not words.

We’ll all drive the brand forward in our own ways. But we’ll speak with one voice.
The shared narrative

These ten very simple points form the basis of the Britain’s Ocean City narrative.

This is an evolving piece - as new stories become available to us, evidence that will re-invigorate and reinforce our brand, we will want to deploy them in the overall mix.

It’s worth noting that the examples cited here are just that: examples. Plymouth boasts many, many other excellent stories and offerings, all capable of making the case for the city. So this narrative covers the basics – but is here to be deployed according to perspective and need.

1 **Location, location, location.** Historian RAJ Walling notes that “when nature determined that the two river systems of Tamar and Plym should join the sea (here), it determined all that has happened since”. Plymouth has always been driven by its unique position. Whether viewed from the land or the sea, this place is without parallel - and can compete for sheer impact and beauty on a global stage.

2 Plymouth has a **unique and rich history.** The Elizabethan Adventurers; Drake’s victory over the Armada; the sailing of the Mayflower in 1620; Napoleon’s imprisonment in the Sound in 1815 – there is much, much more. A strong naval heritage too, which goes back to medieval times, with Devonport still playing a central role in the nation’s defence needs.

3 The city boasts a **world-leading marine sector,** which straddles education, business and visitor attractions. Plymouth University is at the fore here, epitomised by its spectacular new Marine Building. Many businesses, large and small, are thriving in the sector. And the National Marine Aquarium is a brilliant offer encompassing research, education and entertainment.

4 **This is a great place to learn.** There are excellent primary and secondary schools, state and independent. Plymouth University continues to go from strength to strength, and is now in the UK top ten in terms of size. It enjoys a first-class reputation across the disciplines, and is a category leader in terms of its green credentials. Clear “enterprise” positioning matches with the city’s entrepreneurial spirit. Marjon is now a fully-fledged university too, Plymouth College of Art is well established and highly respected, City College also plays its part to the full.

5 Plymouth’s **cultural offer is healthy and diverse.** Historically, it has nurtured great artists, such as Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin Robert Haydon, with Beryl Cook and Robert Lenkiewicz flying the flag for the 20th century. In the here and now, the Theatre Royal is one of Britain’s best, Plymouth Arts Centre is constantly breaking new ground, and the city can also be proud of Peninsula Arts and the Barbican Theatre – amongst others.

6 Plymouth is increasingly **renowned for sport** – especially when it’s water-related. The fact that it’s a great place for competitive sailing is evidenced by the hugely successful America’s Cup World Series in 2011, with many other prestigious events following, such as the Rolex Fastnet in 2013. Tom Daley has captivated the nation with his diving, Ruta Meilutyte with her swimming. And it’s not just about the elite end of sport. The Life Centre is as good as it gets, and has surpassed all expectations in terms of usage and popularity.

7 The city now has a **brilliant food story** - it’s become a real hotspot. That’s not surprising, given the recent shift of focus towards quality of ingredients, so readily available here. Plymouth covers the waterfront, from the highend restaurants of world-class chefs through excellent mid-range offerings to great pubs and cafés. In terms of the main food quarters, both Royal William Yard and the Barbican provide locals and visitors alike with fantastic environments to eat and drink.

8 Plymouth is very good at putting on **great events** – which more often than not feed from the city’s location and core strengths. Examples would include the ever popular British Fireworks Championships, with the Sound providing a fantastic backdrop; Flavour Fest, which attracts tens of thousands of visitors; Armed Forces Day; and the Plymouth Ocean City Festival, which becomes bigger by the year.

9 **Package all this together, and add in a great retail offering and you can see that Plymouth offers a wonderful lifestyle.** It’s the closest Britain offers to the Sydney experience – work through the day, and be down by or on the water in the early evening. With great culture, food, shopping, events and fun stuff in general. Combine that with the excellent education offer, and you can see why Plymouth is such a great place to bring up a family.

10 Last but not least, Plymouth is a **complete one-off** in terms of its personality. It delivers a unique experience. Whether on the Hoe, in the city centre, in Central Park, there is a great sense of physical openness. Which is reflected in the welcome that one receives in Plymouth – as befits a city which has been a point of exchange for centuries. In addition, Plymouth is about resilience, entrepreneurship, and pride. So when we are acting as advocates for Plymouth and its people, we must do so with pride – and real confidence. It’s authentic, and it’s a city of global resonance. There’s nowhere quite like it!
A few words about target audiences

One of the really interesting things about developing a strategic brand for a great city is the extraordinary range of audiences we have to reach.

First, there is the internal marketplace. Let’s make our people more and more Plymouth Proud – and confident to be seen as such.

So we need to reach our children, from a very young age. We need to reach our students. We need to reach our adults of working age. We need to reach our professional and business communities.

And we also need to reach our media professionals, and encourage them to talk the city up, and promote the new brand proposition as much as possible.

We need to hardwire Plymouth with Britain’s Ocean City. And deploy it as the long-term vision that will stimulate delivery at a world-class level.

Externally, we have to remember that the objective of regaining global status for the city will in part demand that we reach selected global markets, as well as regional and national ones.

There are eight basic “sectors”, all of which will need to be served.

- **Government and opinion-formers** at national level. Primarily through lobbying, but the brand has a role in creating a sympathetic backdrop
- **Potential visitors**. Initially within the UK, ultimately spreading out to the EC and USA.
  - There are many sub-divisions in this sector, including Uni VFR’s, “resident trippers”, and cultural couples. Suffice to say, it’s a broad church
- **Culture**. As per above, with the addition of the internal market
- **Food**. Ditto. Particularly interested here in the Cornwall/Devon summer visitors who currently bypass Plymouth. Plus the nationals, to help build our deserved reputation as a foodie hotspot
- **Education**. Help attract the best students, nationally and in targeted overseas markets. Also reinforce those who have chosen Plymouth – and their parents
- **Shop Plymouth**. We need to continue to promote our retail offer internally and also to the region. And we also need to lobby the national retail establishment, who can help us further improve the offer
- **“Living and working”**. That is partly about reinforcing those who have made the choice. And partly about creating awareness of the Plymouth Advantage and forcing reappraisal among those in London and the South East who may have an outdated view of what the city is all about
- **The investment community**. Primarily, but not exclusively, London oriented. Reached primarily through personal approaches and tightly-focused PR. But the brand backdrop will help.

So there are many specialised target audiences.

All need to be reached with messages tailored to their particular needs.

But all will be underpinned by the single uniting thought – Britain’s Ocean City.
On to the physical guidelines

The core purpose of Britain’s Ocean’s City is to act as the narrative for Plymouth. We shall use it to underpin our stories, the facts about our city, our countless hidden gems, our unique personality.

We will do this in order to build pride and confidence, and maximize the effectiveness of our external marketing. To build competitive advantage for our great city.

If we create worldwide recognition and interest, this will attract more visitors, bring in more investment, make our case at national and international opinion-former level. And so much more.

But we have to speak with one voice. Not just with what we say, but also with the way we say it.

So to accompany the strategic underpinnings, we need to work to a set of guidelines – anchored of course, by a simple logo and look.

The underlying principle here is that we need to build consistency of presentation.

With absolute clarity as to how to use the physical elements of the Britain’s Ocean City brand.

We know well that the simpler and more user-friendly these guidelines are, the more effective they will be.

So what follows is not going to box people in, or restrict their creativity. But at the same time, the toolkit is essential if we are to deliver that consistency of look – and tone.