

Drake's Statue Interpretation Board Project Frequently Asked Question's

Are you amending the 'plaque' on the statue in the centre of the roundabout?

No, there are no changes of any type proposed to the Statue or its setting or surround. The plaque that currently adorns the Sir Francis Drake statue remains therefore unchanged which reads: Armada 1588. The statue sits in the centre of the road in a busy roundabout and no one can approach it safely. The information panel is sited in another location away from the roundabout on a wide section of pavement with additional information about Sir Francis Drake's life and the history of the statue itself.

Does the new information panel 'change' the wording of the plaque on the statue?

No, the current plaque doesn't describe Sir Francis Drake or his exploits. In fact, the new separately located panel will contain photos of the bas relief panels surrounding the base of the statue which describe certain important events in his history and which otherwise cannot be approached, due to the location of the statue in the roundabout.

Did the Town Council consult with the community regarding the creation of an information panel about Sir Francis Drake?

Yes, Tavistock Town Council published a survey online advertised on the Town Council's website, social media and in the Tavistock Times which requested input from local people about the statue and whether they would like to see any further information about the statue made available on an information panel. The results of the consultation were presented in a public meeting of the council. In addition, the Tavistock Heritage Trust, through an educational program with the local college and Mount Kelly, surveyed A level students from both schools with a similar questionnaire. In both cases, the majority of respondents agreed that more information regarding Sir Francis Drake would be welcome, including information about his participation in the slave trade.

Was the content of the information panel consulted on with the community?

Yes, Tavistock Heritage Trust worked with local historical societies, historians with specific expertise regarding Sir Francis Drake, individuals who responded to the original consultation, students and others in the community, including Town Councillors, regarding the content of the information panel. The design was also published and discussed in the Tavistock Times and did generate both positive and negative letters to the editor of the paper, but did not generate any direct feedback to Tavistock Town Council.

Did 89 local people 'vote against' the information panel?

No, there has been no "vote" about the information panel. There was a public consultation as part of the planning process and West Devon Borough Council as the local planning authority did receive formal objections to the sign. However, of the 89 objections received, there was a great deal of duplication, only one person was from Tavistock and the great majority of the concerns raised were in relation to the content of the signage, which was not a consideration when deciding if permission should be granted for a sign in that location.

There has been a lot of confusion about the wording of the interpretation panel and slavery – what does it actually say about Sir Francis Drake and his involvement in the Slave Trade?

It says

Drake's relative, John Hawkins, was the first Englishman to establish a slave trading venture. Drake sailed on three of his expeditions to Guinea and Sierra Leone. They raided African coastal villages, sometimes kidnapping whole communities. Rival tribal chieftains often joined in the attacks. The captives were shipped in terrible conditions to the West Indies and sold as slaves to the Spanish. They were forced to work on plantations and in the silver mines of South America. Around 1,200 - 1,400 people were enslaved in this way.

In 1568, Hawkins' and Drake's third slaving expedition ended in failure when the Spanish ambushed them. Drake escaped, and was left with a deep hatred of Spain. He was never involved in slave trading again, but instead focussed on attacking the Spanish.

Where can I see the interpretation panel content?

The content of the interpretation panel outlining the story of Drake's life and achievements can be viewed by following the dedicated link at <https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/drake-statue>

Why is the interpretation panel content not exactly the same as that used for the planning application?

The planning application was submitted quite some time ago and, because content is not a planning consideration, the content provided was indicative. The actual content can be viewed at <https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/inline-content/tav-drake-panel.pdf>