

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Environmental Scrutiny Committee
Date:	14 October 2016
Subject:	Environmental Services Property Review

Summary:

To highlight the potential opportunities and constraints regarding future management of the Environmental Services property portfolio (excluding operational Waste Services sites).

Actions Required:

Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider and comment on the report and support a recommendation to the Executive Member for Development that the future management options outlined in the report for each site are investigated and acted upon accordingly.

1. Background

- 1.1 Lincolnshire County Council's Environmental Services has a wide and varying portfolio of 53 properties. This includes waste transfer stations, recycling centres, the Energy from Waste plant, one domestic property, a visitor centre, offices, stores, closed landfill site sites, green spaces and an extensive area of the coast. Some of the land is leased to or from LCC, some is jointly owned and the majority is in freehold ownership. The property portfolio has evolved piecemeal over decades and current management costs to the County Council are approximately £180,000 per annum, excluding staff time. Operational sites such as waste transfer stations, household waste sites and the buildings occupied by the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service are outside the scope of this report and excluded from the above cost. Appendix A shows the location of sites considered.
- 1.2 Initial considerations of the various sites indicate that some may no longer meet the strategic needs of the County Council or are an unsustainable drain on the reducing budgets of Environmental Services. This paper is an initial assessment to review the potential management options for the various sites and to provide an example of one site where such considerations have been investigated.

- 1.3 The strategic values of each site will vary depending on the type of site and its location. Many of the sites are important green spaces to their local communities who may not wish for them to be lost and, whilst local councils have not yet been consulted about the future of these sites, opportunities to assume management via parish councils will be considered where appropriate.
- 1.4 Consideration must also be given to any future strategic value of sites, especially those on the coast, which are important to both the tourist economy and wildlife conservation. The emerging Lincolnshire Heritage Coast vision will demonstrate the potential for a significantly different but complimentary tourist offer to the traditional holiday coast. All LCC owned coastal land would contribute to the Heritage Coast initiative in some way.
- 1.5 Therefore an opportunity remains to rationalise the number of sites operated by Environmental Services which may potentially reduce running costs and/or increase income whilst also reviewing whether key strategic sites would benefit from capital investment to upgrade facilities.

2. Glossary

2.1 Lindsey County Council (Sandhills Act 1932)

In the 1920s it was perceived by Lindsey County Council that uncontrolled development along 40 km of the areas coastline was having a detrimental effect on the area both in terms of planning control and reduced amenity of the coastline itself. The council approached parliament to grant powers by way of an Act due to the need for urgent preventative and remedial action, In 1932 parliament passed the Lindsey County Council (Sandhills) Act. This conferred unprecedented powers to secure the optimum use and management of the sand dunes by means of planning controls and land acquisition. Following local government reorganisation in 1974 the control of land acquired by Lindsey CC was passed to Lincolnshire County Council as the successor authority.

2.2 Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

An LNR is an area of land that has been specifically designated by LCC under provisions of the Natural Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. Some are also nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Declared sites are protected against damaging operations. They may also have protection against development on and around them. This protection is usually given via the Local Plan, (produced by the planning authority), and often supplemented by local by-laws. Unlike national designations, the level and type of protection afforded an LNR is decided locally, and varies from site to site.

2.3 National Nature Reserve (NNR)

NNR's have been established to protect the country's most important habitats, species and geology, and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research. They are designated by Natural England and provide opportunities to schools, specialist interest groups and the public to experience wildlife at first hand and to learn more about nature conservation.

NNR's are given strict protection against damaging operations, and any such operations must be authorised Natural England. They also have strong protection against development on and around them. An NNR has the highest level of conservation protection available under UK legislation.

2.4 Natural Environment Strategy 2012-2018

An overarching strategy and policy document concerning the County Council's duties and aims to maintain, protect, improve and promote Lincolnshire's natural environment.

Lincolnshire owes its unique character in large part to its natural environment, which is valued and enjoyed for its own sake by residents and visitors all year round. Lincolnshire County Council has a statutory duty to have regard to biodiversity and the nationally protected landscape of the Lincolnshire Wolds in undertaking its operations, and for many years has been involved with partner organisations in delivering initiatives and managing sites and areas that maintain, protect, improve and promote Lincolnshire's natural environment.

2.5 Emerging Heritage Coastal Vision

The County Council is beginning to put together a document, alongside other partner bodies, to inform council policy specifically relating to the coastline.

The 4 emerging aims of the document are:

- Conserve, enhance and create a diverse, landscape-scale network of wildlife habitats.
- Support and encourage a healthy local economy based on a year-round sustainable tourism destination
- Increase awareness and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the area; building recognition locally, nationally and internationally
- Provide recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors within the natural and historic environment.

2.6 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

A SSSI is an area of land protected by law to conserve their wildlife or geology. They are designated by Natural England and owners of land deemed as SSSI must abide by management schemes to meet the legal obligations. Works on SSSI sites require prior consent from Natural England.

3. Types of sites under LCC (Environmental Services) ownership

- Former Landfill Sites:
e.g. *Mareham Pastures, Alford, Barlings*
- Large Strategic Environmental Sites:
e.g. *Gibraltar Point, Snipedales*
- Coastal Access Sites:
e.g. *Stonebridge, Rimac, Howden's Pullover, Huttoft Car Terrace, Anderby Creek, Marsh Yard, Freiston Shore*
- Picnic Sites:
e.g. *Willingham Woods, Sutton Bridge, Tattershall, Stickney*
- Natural Environment Sites:
e.g. *Tunman Wood, Cross O' Cliff Orchard, Horncastle Community Woodland*
- Lindsey County Council (Sandhills) Act 1932 Land:
e.g. *Stretches of coastal and dune systems*

4. Considerations and Onward Proposals

Each site or set of sites will be considered on their own merit and whilst the following is not exhaustive it provides a basis for the considerations that will be made by officers from both Environmental Services and Property Services prior to making recommendations to the Portfolio Holders for Development and for Property.

- Overriding Legislation such as the Sandhills Act (see glossary at point 2.1)
- Statutory designations such as SSSI, LNR, NNR (see glossary at point 2.2-2.6)
- Restrictions due to contamination, for example of former landfill sites.
- Existing lease agreements both to and from LCC, for example with commercial operators, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Crown Estates
- Costs of running sites such as rateable values, cleaning, grass cutting, utilities, sanitation and approximated management time.
- Actual and potential values for income generation through leases to concessions, fees and charges (e.g. parking) Importance to various schemes and strategies such the Natural Environment Strategy, the emerging Heritage Coast Vision, the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park and Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marshes

- Potential development opportunities for improving sites to meet the future aims and strategies of the authority.
- Community value / Greenspace value

Potential available options may include:

- Invest in a site to ensure greater potential for community value or for opportunities for alternative long term management.
- Retaining a site under current management provisions.
- Retaining a site but altering the management provisions or to withdraw for managing a site completely
- Retain a site but with lease agreements to a third party conditional on their management of the site for a fixed or reviewable period.
- Sale of a site to other authority (e.g. Parish Council) or interested body (Lincs Wildlife Trust)
- Sale of site for commercial value.

Where LCC currently leases land consideration as to the potential transfer of that lease to a third party should be made depending on the individual circumstances of each property.

It is proposed that following officer investigation recommendations as to the onward management of sites should be made to the Executive Members for both Development and Property for a final decision.

4. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Site Locations of Environmental Services Property
Appendix B	Case Example – Stickney Picnic Site

6. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Lincolnshire County Council Natural Environment Strategy	https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/Download/43070

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Lindsey County Council (Sandhills) Act 1932 [22 & 23 Geo. 5.]	Copy available from Countryside Services, Unit 7, Witham Park House, Waterside South, Lincoln
The impact of recreation on the coast: The Lindsey County Council (Sandhills) act, 1932 John Sheail	http://www.sciencedirect.com/

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Appendix A – Site Locations

Site Name		
1 Mareham Pastures LNR		
2 South Thoresby Warren LNR		
3 Nettleton Former Landfill site		
4 Alford Former Landfill site		
5 Cow bank Closed Landfill site Skegness		
6 Barlings Closed Landfill site		
7 Tattershall Closed Landfill site		
8 Cross O' Cliff Orchard LNR		
9 Horncastle Community Woodland		
10 Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve		
Gibraltar Point Assistant Warden's Bungalow		
Croft & Wainfleet St Mary Foreshore		
11 Snipedales Country Park		
12 Tunman Wood		
13 Willoughby and Farlesthorpe Nature Reserve		
14 Huttoft Marsh		
Anderby Creek Car Park		
Wolla Bank Wildlife Habitat		
Marsh Yard and Moggs Eye		
Huttoft Car Terrace		
Chapel Six Marshes		
Sandhill's and Beach/Admiral Benbow		
Chapel Point Nature Area		20 Scampton Viewpoint
15 Freiston Shore		21 Spa Trail Woodhall Spa to Horncastle
16 Legbourne Picnic Site	22 Sutton Bridge Wingland	
17 Willingham Picnic	23 Theddlethorpe St Helen, Crook Bank Car Park	
18 Stickney Picnic	24 Salfleet Nature Reserve	
19 Tattershall Picnic Site		

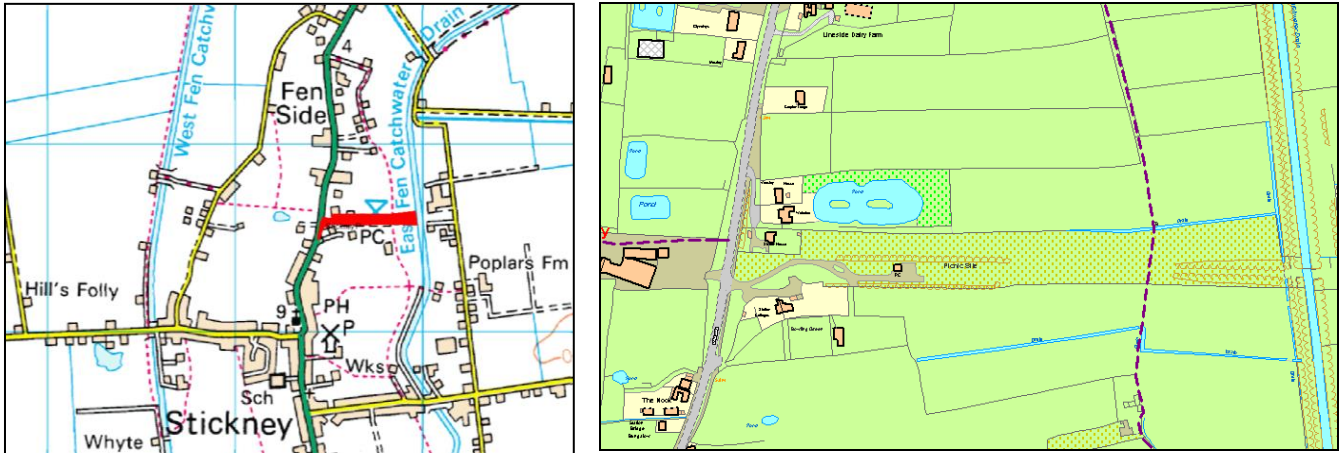
Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Appendix B – Case Example – Stickney Picnic Site

Stickney Picnic Site



Located on the A16 at Stickney, between Boston and Spilsby.

Formally Stickney Railway Station it was purchased by LCC in 1974 and now contains a public toilet (currently closed due to repeated vandalism), car park, litter bins, grassland and trees. The area is reasonably well used by visitors however it has occasionally suffered from anti-social behaviour. Largely due to the toilets and vandalism the site has an annual running cost of approximately £7,000 which excludes roughly £4,600 of work undertaken by Public Rights of Way Area Maintenance Teams. It is estimated that it would require up to £20,000 to repair the toilets to a suitable specification. The site only contributes minimally to LCC's Natural Environment Strategy, but is important to the local community. It presents potential opportunities which could be explored for housing or industrial development, garden expansions or as a small camping or caravan site.

Item	Expenditure
Monthly grass cutting by AMT 8 days (£3,200)	No budget cost*
Ditch clearance by AMT 1.5 days (£600)	No budget cost*
Tree works by AMT 2 days (£800)	No budget cost*
Warden costs including toilet cleaning (Summer 10hrs/week & winter 4hrs/week)	£900
Rates	£1,621
Water	£300
Electric	£520
Fly tipping	£500
Weekly bin emptying @£14/week	£1,200
Property insurance	£75
Electrical and legionella testing	£100
Maintenance of hand dryers	£144
Picnic table and bin replacement and repair	£500
Repair of sewage pump	£700
General site maintenance and repairs	£440
Total	£7,000

*the cost of the AMT is borne in the PROW budgets

Appendix B – Case Example – Stickney Picnic Site

Options *(no recommendation or decision is made for the purpose of this paper and the following are for example only)*

Disposal

The Parish Council may wish to take on this site or it could be sold in the most financially beneficial way.

Retain

The running of the site provides a significant expenditure within the available budget. Alternative methods of managing the site should be explored including alternative means of vegetation clearance.

Retain with no public toilets

Repair and maintenance of the public toilets is the major financial drain. The area could be run for significantly less were the toilets to be closed.

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