

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

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	17 July 2017
Subject:	Achieving Environmental and Tourism Benefits from Investment in Coastal Management

Summary:

To outline the nature and scope of current and future coastal management and explore opportunities arising for developing the visitor economy and achieving environmental improvements.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to:

- 1) Guide officers in developing Lincolnshire County Council's contribution to steering development and implementation of future coastal management approaches after March 2021;
- 2) Support the ongoing work to ensure that businesses and communities from the coastal strip have equal access to the services commissioned by Environment and Economy;
- 3) Support the development a plan for achieving added value for tourism and business from partnership investment in coastal management. This should build on successful investment already made by the Council and other agencies, with a draft anticipated to be presented to this Committee by November 2017.

1. Background

Coastal management in Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire's coastline is approximately 120km long and is home to about 225,000 people. It is predominantly protected from coastal inundation by raised defences. Some 40% of Lincolnshire's land mass is at or below sea level and benefits from this protection, as well as from an extensive system of river embankments and drainage networks. These areas include the most productive areas of agricultural land in the county (25% of England's grade 1 agricultural land) as well as food processing and tourism businesses that are critical to Lincolnshire's economy.

While the nature and extent of the coastal defences vary, the most intensive area of protection is that from Mablethorpe to Skegness. In this area the coast is subject to erosion from the action of the sea. Without intervention, this would ultimately lead to removal of the beaches that form a key part of the attractiveness of these locations to visitors. Loss of the beach would then lead to erosion of the underlying boulder clay and subsequent undermining of the hard defences that exist to protect the most populous sections of coast.

Since the 1990s, intervention has existed in the shape of the Lincshore programme, which replenishes sections of beach material at an annual cost of between £5m - £7m. This has proved cost effective and, in December 2013, proved its worth in preventing serious coastal flooding during a higher surge tide than accompanied the major floods of 1953.

Long term sea level rise, however, means that at some point in the future the scale of replenishment required to maintain the existing standard of defence is likely to become cost prohibitive and potentially technically unsustainable. As a result, the Environment Agency, which has operational responsibility for coastal management in Lincolnshire, is leading a public and stakeholder consultation to develop a long term approach to replace the current Lincshore programme when it reaches its conclusion in March 2021.

Lincolnshire County Council and its partners have been working closely with the Environment Agency to explore how future coastal management techniques can maintain the present standard of defence while offering greater opportunities for local businesses – particularly those in the visitor economy – to thrive into the future. This includes enhancing the county's coastal environment which provides a key draw for many coastal tourism businesses.

Current national funding sources for flood risk management focus on protection to people and property. This means that works undertaken with the explicit intention of unlocking economic growth, or of providing broader strategic protection to areas including stretches with limited permanent population, are unlikely to attract full government funding. It is essential, therefore, that alternative approaches are explored, which includes ensuring that coastal management is planned as a means of achieving multiple benefits.

Economic Growth

The previous section of the report has described the importance of protecting coastal areas from flooding. It has also described the opportunities to create added value between investment in flood protection and in wider tourism and economic growth.

From an economic growth perspective there are three considerations: agricultural land, tourism and diversified business sectors, and coastal communities.

Agricultural land

Lincolnshire has some of the highest grade agricultural land in the UK, and the land which would be protected by coastal defences is included in that definition. Generally speaking, the agricultural and horticultural sector is supported by DEFRA, higher/further education, and private advisers. There is, however, a role that LCC has played and could play into the future.

1. LCC co-ordinates the Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture. The Forum makes regular representations to DEFRA about the agricultural policy that is required to help the sector to thrive. At this stage, though, there are no agricultural businesses from the East Lindsey coastal area and it would be beneficial to encourage a farmer from the area to join the forum.
2. Agriculture and horticulture is a sector which continues to go through significant change, especially technological advances. LCC works closely with the University of Lincoln's Institute for Agri-food Technology, helping them to assemble projects which will attract government funding for business technology.
3. There is a significant need for skilled workers in the agri-food sector. This is often at a managerial and technical level. LCC has recently provided a small amount of support to a partnership of the National Farmers Union, Countryside Landowners Association, and Bishop Burton College to a Lincolnshire Agricultural Business Academy which will pick around 20 agri-food leaders of the future and give them access to a high quality programme that will improve their leadership skills. LCC will work with the partnership to promote the Academy to agricultural businesses from the East Lindsey coastal area.

Visitor economy

The visitor economy is of course very strong in the East Lindsey coastal strip. Independent studies into the visitor economy show that visitor expectations are changing, and that there is a good opportunity for the area to both strengthen its existing offer to families and also to diversify into other parts of tourism –notably the green and heritage agenda which will appeal to an older visitor demographic. LCC works with partners such as East Lindsey District Council and the Coastal Business Improvement Group on this issue.

1. LCC co-ordinates the Coastal Developers Forum which brings together business leaders in the area with the strategic organisations whose decisions can support business investment –notably local MPs, Environment Agency, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, ELDC, and LCC ourselves.
2. LCC has led projects which are helping to diversify the tourism offer most notably Structures on the Edge, Coastal Country Park, Gibraltar Point Visitor Centre, Skegness Countryside Business Park, and the North Sea Observatory. These investments are having a real impact on the diversification of the area and they have raised the area's tourism offer to a

similar level to other parts of the UK. However, without further investment (in further diversified attractions and in "Things to do" such as cycling routes) then there is a risk that the area will be left behind.

Coastal communities

It is important that as well as investing in infrastructure, LCC also supports the communities themselves. Towns and villages in the coastal strip are by their very nature peripheral and often lack the critical mass for providers such as colleges or medical centres to operate viably. The majority of the responsibility for services of this nature does not sit with Environment and Economy, but it is important that the services are maintained and enhanced in order for the area to be seen as attractive to investors.

1. LCC co-ordinates the national Coastal Communities Alliance which seeks to raise the profile of coastal regeneration within government and other agencies
2. LCC's Environment and Economy services commission training and business support programmes. Team managers are committed to ensuring that commissioned services are delivered throughout the county and that peripheral areas are not disadvantaged. Currently 23% of businesses who have received support from the Business Growth Hub are from East Lindsey and 19% of adult learning services are from East Lindsey.

2. Conclusion

Lincolnshire's coast offers one of its principal visitor and environmental assets. The current review of coastal management represents an important opportunity to plan for a sustainable future for coastal businesses and communities. The potential to develop an approach to coastal management that integrates these ambitions offers a means of securing the step change in growth and prosperity that is set out in Greater Lincolnshire's Strategic Economic Plan, while building on Lincolnshire's existing strengths and aspirations.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out??

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire Coastal Map

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by David Hickman, Growth & Environment Commissioner and Justin Brown, Commissioner for Economic Growth who can be contacted at david.hickman@lincolnshire.gov.uk and justin.brown@lincolnshire.gov.uk .

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