

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

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 November 2017
Subject:	Achieving added value for Tourism and Business from Coastal Management

Summary:

To review progress on developing a long term plan for promoting tourism and environmental protection in the context of investing in coastal management

Actions Required:

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

- 1) Consider and comment on proposals for developing further the opportunities available through the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park and;
- 2) Endorse the range of activities and priorities for action as identified in the report.

1. Background

The area covered by the Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park offers a distinct range of opportunities for establishing a strong, recognised area identity, promoting visitor access, improving amenities and facilities, and developing more effective use of natural and built assets. This paper seeks to consolidate the benefits of existing initiatives in the area and actively to take advantage of further opportunities to generate future sustainable income streams and investment.

Strategic context

Shoreline Management Plans

Long term policy for physically managing Lincolnshire's coastline is set out in the Shoreline Management Plans (Flamborough Head to Gibraltar Point and The Wash). The overall intention of management for the east coast up to 2125 is to maintain the coastline in its current position, with the same standard of protection from coastal flooding, and to protect businesses, economic activity and communities in the area.

These plans, completed in 2012, are part of LCC's policy framework and accommodate the evidence of the 2010 Lincolnshire Coastal Study. As such they are primarily intended to provide protection to the communities, businesses and infrastructure assets already in place at that time. A light touch review programme of Shoreline Management Plan is shortly to commence, managed through Coastal Groups and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

The Lincolnshire Coastal Study and Local Plans

The Coastal Study was intended to be the preparatory stage for a coastal strategy within the Regional Spatial Strategy, and, as such, would have taken into account the broader requirements of future growth and development alongside existing socio-economic conditions. Revocation of regional planning meant that the coastal study was completed as an evidence base for existing conditions. Local Plans have incorporated this evidence base to a varied extent, but they were not able to draw on robust data regarding future growth.

The LEP and the Strategic Economic Plan

The establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships placed a greater policy emphasis on promoting economic growth. The creation of Strategic Economic Plans provided clearer and better evidenced priority objectives for growth, and a stronger emphasis on unlocking growth and investment potential. For Greater Lincolnshire this means a clear focus on manufacturing, agri-food and the visitor economy, and the coastal parts of the county are central to both the visitor economy and the agri-food industry.

The LEP Water Management Plan

The GLLEP recognises the significance of co-ordinated flood risk and water resource management as a driver for economic growth, and consequently has a keen interest in future coastal management. Its Water Management Plan establishes a programme of work to implement an approach to water management that specifically facilitates growth, including exploring new funding channels where growth potential can be demonstrated and where additional works can be achieved beyond what is currently possible under existing rules for government flood risk funding.

Coastal Vision

The need for a co-ordinated approach is particularly clear in coastal parts of Lincolnshire, not least because of the high potential for such an approach to generate enhanced and future outcomes. The Greater Lincolnshire LEP has accordingly outlined its overall ambitions for the Lincolnshire coast in a Coastal Vision document, agreed in 2016. This outlines three objectives and a vision as follows:

- To sustain and grow coastal businesses and the economy
- To sustain and develop coastal prosperity through infrastructure
- To protect and sustain the coastal environment

By 2035 coastal communities and businesses will be seen as good opportunities for investment because of secure water supply and coastal management, planning policy that supports growth and the environment, and a thriving visitor economy that benefits local communities and visitors alike.

As applied to the east coast, these objectives clearly require development, diversification and enhancement of the visitor economy and the assets / environment that sustain and encourage it.

The Lincolnshire Coastal Country Park and Grazing Marshes

Since 2009 LCC and its partners have been working to create a dynamic and extensive Coastal Country Park, along the Lincolnshire Coast, between Sandilands and Chapel St Leonards, providing high quality facilities for people and better protection for wildlife, whilst contributing to the local economy.

Vision: A sustainable coastal environment providing high quality facilities for communities and visitors, improvements for wildlife and contributing to a healthy local economy.

Aims:

- Create a sustainable, diverse, landscape-scale network of wildlife habitats
- Support and encourage a healthy economy based on a year-round sustainable tourism destination
- Increase awareness and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the area
- Provide recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors within the natural environment

Working at a landscape- scale the LCCP partnership have successfully created a network of wildlife habitats, within the core area, whilst improving and creating public access and recreational opportunities and working with local businesses.

Some of the achievements include:

- Wildlife: 5 new nature reserves (approx 200 acres); improved management of important habitats; increase in wildlife; Local Wildlife Site designations:
- Visitor information and facilities: branding; visitor surveys; interpretation plan; website; leaflets; 4 car park upgraded; visitor gateway sites and panels; art installations; North Sea Observatory.
- Access and recreation: Sustainable Transport Strategy; rationalisation of PROW network; new PROW and permissive paths; installation of bridges; guided walk leaflets; visitor surveys

The initial work of the LCCP partnership has created a landscape scale network of wildlife habitats within the core area, whilst creating public access and recreational

opportunities. This provides a framework for a broader co-ordinated visitor approach to be developed, unspoilt rural natural and cultural environment.

Since 2007 LCC and its partners have been working to create a dynamic and extensive Coastal Country Park, along the Lincolnshire Coast, between Sandilands and Chapel St Leonards, providing high quality facilities for people and better protection for wildlife. This provides a discrete, landscape scale core on which a broader co-ordinated approach can be developed, and was established around an existing, comparatively rare, concentration of nature conservation sites within an unspoilt rural environment.

Strengthening the 'sense of place' in this locality is central to the purpose of the coastal country park, which seeks to enhance the quality of the natural environment in a defined area in order to diversify the visitor 'offer' of the coast more widely, to improve the visitor experience and to encourage more and repeat visits and longer stays. In creating better access within the park area it effectively improves linkage and access across a chain of assets along the coast, from Gibraltar in the south to Donna Nook in the north, a function which will be greatly enhanced by the provision of the coastal observatory at Chapel St Leonards just at the southern edge of the coastal country park.

In the strategic context summarised above the coastal country park offers a number of opportunities as a focus for a co-ordinated drive to improve assets, amenities and access along the coast. These include

- Existing brand recognition, which could be strengthened and broadened as the basis for a heritage coast designation and stronger regional and national marketing
- A defined area with local acceptance as a focal point for developing new approaches
- A significant historic landscape element – through the coast grazing marshes – to link environmental and 'heritage' interest
- Continue improvement of access routes within the existing park area
- A number of local businesses catering to a wider visitor experience than the traditional resorts to north and south of the area
- Opportunities to develop a co-ordinated approach to handling visitor numbers through managing traffic and parking, including potential for income generation in support of maintenance and continued development
- Existing research data on current visitor profile along with potential for targeted improvements to diversify the visitor profile in the future

The Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point Review

The Environment Agency is currently leading a review and public consultation process to develop and implement the management regime to be applied to the coast from 2021, when the current phase of the existing scheme expires. This is being undertaken as implementation of the policies set out in the Shoreline Management Plan, and represents a significant opportunity to develop a management regime which not only protects what currently exists, but looks to the future and anticipates the needs of growth and development in the coastal zone.

A critical element will be the identification of long term local funding if more is to be achieved than the basic needs of flood protection. In this regard, the LEP's Coastal Vision was a first step in providing a sense of a common aspiration for the kind of coast that Lincolnshire wants and needs to have in the future. Building an integrated approach based on the coastal country park could support this as a practical step in realising this vision, and in providing a steer for the way in which coastal defence should be undertaken and funded.

Strategic opportunities

The range of initiatives outlined above share a common goal of securing long term social, economic and environmental improvements for residents, businesses and visitors in and to the east coast area. The principal drivers behind them, which also deliver the key objectives within the Strategic Economic Plan, are

- Growing and diversifying the visitor economy
- Developing resilience to climate change and coastal inundation
- Promoting access within and to the area
- Improving natural and built assets and amenity

The coast from Gibraltar Point northwards presents the most concentrated opportunities for development of the visitor economy, and in 2016, for the first time, the coastal economy contributed £500m to Greater Lincolnshire's overall economic performance. LCC has undertaken analyses of the visitors who are currently the customers of these businesses, in order to better understand how to target appropriate initiatives and develop the appeal of the coastal 'offer'.

The main visitors to Lincolnshire are 45+, often taking short breaks. Eating, drinking, and visiting local markets are most popular with this group as is taking coastal walks. Using visitor economy definitions our visitors are primarily 'traditionals' and 'functionals'.

- **Traditionals** value personal service, preferring destinations that are renowned for their scenery and are not too crowded with other tourists. 73% are above the age of 45. They tend to take life at a leisurely pace which is reflected in the types of attractions that appeal (gardens, galleries, etc). They have average levels of internet access and average income levels but they will pay for good service.
- **Functionals** are cost conscious, seeking the cheapest option as they do not want to pay for unnecessary extras. They are independent and will tend to arrange all the aspects of their holiday themselves. They are marginally biased towards the older age groups with 63% above the age of 45. They have average levels of income and average levels of internet access.

Lincolnshire's rural coast is recognised as being one of its strengths, being rated as better than Norfolk and Yorkshire's rural coast by our visitors. However, Northumberland is rated substantially higher by the same visitors.

55% of our sample said that they prioritise "coastal village life", characterised by relaxing on a slower-paced traditional break in a smaller seaside town or village; hiring a beach hut; walking, cycling or tennis; sampling fresh local produce at cosy pubs; exploring local markets and festivals. Shopping is seen as an important part of "coastal village life", with independent retail and antiques (!) seen as preferred types of shopping.

34% prioritise "unspoilt coastline and wildlife", which means that they tend to leave the beaten track, seeking a tranquil and unspoilt coastline which is a haven for birds, seals and other wildlife. They enjoy the fresh air and freedom of the sand dunes and marshes and enjoy getting close to nature.

There are likely to be a number of new visitor markets that could be attracted to the LCCP which would bring greater economic impact by; attracting investment into greater and more appealing product within the existing themes, enabling the development of new high value added themes and better marketing and promotion of the offer within a broader geographic area.

An obvious potential new theme that could be developed and exploited within the area is that of outdoor sports and activities. This is likely to fit very well with the original objectives of the Coastal County Park which includes creating better access to and promoting healthy pursuits for tourists and residents. There may also be opportunities to further develop the close association between outdoor activity, environmental enhancement and health.

2. Conclusion: Priorities for Action

On the basis summarised above, officers are pursuing the following programme to develop and grow the opportunities present in the Coastal Country Park area.

- 1) Establish alignment between existing data on visitors to the Lincolnshire coast and the experience of visitors to the LCCP
 - identify areas of unmet need and action plan for meeting it – could also include review of existing legislation such as Sandhills Act to help define what is possible in development terms
 - Establish robust baseline of current value of tourism in LCCP area, including actual and potential visitor spend

- 2) Clearly define the geographical extent of the LCCP on the ground, & identify an appropriate designation that creates sufficient status to be recognized in local planning policy – enhance the 'sense of place'.
 - Currently producing a report (November) to outline designation options for the LCCP)
 - Potential for reconsidering the location of the boundary and identifying different zones within the LCCP that could then focus involvement and investment and priorities.

- 3) Strengthen the marketing, branding and signing of the CCP utilising the existing brand – develop this within the concept of a broader 'heritage coast', supporting planning policy recognition of the area and exploiting best available evidence on current and potential future provision.
 - Officers are currently outlining options and costings for physically marking the geographical extent of the LCCP on the ground. A similar piece of work was recently completed for the Wolds AONB
- 4) Identify and progress potential for provision of a visitor amenity site at Anderby, including consideration of additional parking. Officers are exploring potential properties or lands that might be available and suitable for a significant new visitor attraction and amenity.
- 5) Develop a parking strategy and implementation plan for the coastal country park area that contributes to improved access within and around the area, including improved parking facilities at key locations. Prioritise practical solutions to known preferred parking areas such as Anderby Creek and Huttoft and evaluate introduction of an appropriate charging regime at the earliest opportunity.

Members are asked to consider the range of activities outlined, and to comment on these proposals.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Background Papers

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

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