

**Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson,  
Executive Director – Place**

Report to:	<b>Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>24 February 2020</b>
Subject:	<b>Developing a strategy for the sustainable future of the coast</b>

**Summary:**

The report outlines work to establish a partnership approach to the securing the future of Lincolnshire's coastal areas. This builds on existing public and stakeholder aspirations. It aims to provide a framework to shape and support delivery of strategic objectives in a way that is most appropriate to the coastal context.

**Actions Required:**

The Committee is asked to consider the approach outlined, and provide guidance to officers in continuing to develop the strategy and vision for coastal Lincolnshire.

## **1. Background**

The east coast of Lincolnshire is a key part of the visitor economy, and plays an important part in the county's agriculture, service industries and provision of social care. Understanding how the coast might look in the future, how it will support the long term health and wellbeing of its communities, environment and businesses and how it will best function as a key part of the county and country's environment and economy is essential in deriving decisions about what the most appropriate form of coastal management might be. In effect, when we understand how we wish the coast to work in future, we can better determine how we wish to approach managing the coast and associated flood risk.

This report outlines work in progress to establish a co-ordinated vision for the future of the Lincolnshire coast to help link up and strengthen our shared approach to flood risk management, economic development, housing and housing policy, infrastructure, enhancing the natural environment and supporting the visitor economy. It is intended that this strategy should be developed as a partnership venture, and discussions about it are already in train with the Environment Agency and East Lindsey District Council, with a view to launching the strategic approach in early 2021 to align with commencement of the next phase of coastal management as well as the national Year of the English Coast.

## **Aligning key initiatives**

The Environment Agency is currently leading on developing the Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point Strategy, which will outline the future approach to coastal management techniques along the East Lindsey coastline for the next fifteen years. It implements the broad policies established in the 2012 Shoreline Management Plan, and takes account of a wide range of stakeholder views and existing strategies. This approach is incorporated within the Joint Lincolnshire Flood

Risk and Water Management Strategy, and reflects the Greater Lincolnshire LEP's Coastal Vision, as well as the overall economic objectives in the Strategic Economic Plan and the emerging Local Industrial Strategy.

In planning policy terms, the current Adopted Local Plan (July 2018), developed by East Lindsey District Council, takes, in some respects a precautionary approach to flood risk, limiting housing development in coastal zones subject to flood risk to existing commitments. New housing is supported but primarily for affordable housing, conversions and the development of brownfield land. Employment development and development associated with economic growth and tourism is strongly supported but there is a limitation on the occupancy period for caravans over the higher risk winter period. In this respect some forms of development could increasingly become at odds with LEP ambitions to grow and diversify the local economy, including attracting a more diverse and higher skilled workforce to coastal areas.

In September 2019 the Government announced that 100 places were invited to develop proposals for a new generation of multi-million-pound Town Deals, two of those places were on the Lincolnshire coast, being Mablethorpe and Skegness, with the potential to unlock £50m of funding for each of those towns. In order to form a clear link with a robust vision for the coast, a review of the Council's Local Plan is taking place to ensure that growth is directed to and supported in these two communities. It will also enable the LEP ambitions to grow and assist with the narrative that partners are seeking.

## **Emerging national policy**

The draft National Flood Risk and Coastal Management Strategy stresses resilience of place, and offers an opportunity to present a proactive solution at a significant scale which addresses the issue of strategic flood risk resilience as an integral part of supporting the UK national economy by protecting high quality agri-food and visitor economy assets, underpinned by a robust, high quality environment.

For this reason it is important that the vision for the coast supports a strong narrative around potential and future growth, along with an evolutionary vision for development of Lincolnshire's coastal area, while making the case and narrative for continuing investment to enable that evolution. An important part of the strategic approach will, therefore, include a strong and clear case for sustaining its coastal communities and assets, and for promotion of future growth and development in these areas.

## Scope of strategic approach

In 2015 the Greater Lincolnshire LEP created a coastal vision as a first step towards linking coastal flood risk management policy and emerging economic aspirations for the Greater Lincolnshire coastal zones, from the Humber Estuary to the Norfolk boundary. This has helped to improve the robustness of our evidence base for the present economy of coastal Lincolnshire, and to develop outline ambitions for what it might be in the future.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that full consideration of coastal Lincolnshire and its role and function in the future could involve a very wide range of policy areas and stakeholders. In the interests of maintaining control and clarity it is suggested that it should be relatively tightly defined to focus on a core purpose while allowing for wider engagement and influence where appropriate. It is suggested that the following are the core subject areas around which a strategic vision or approach should be developed:

- Flood risk management & climate resilience
- Economic development
- Infrastructure & housing planning
- Environmental & heritage management
- Access and 'brand'

It is also suggested that the initiative should be confined to the east coast from Gibraltar Point northwards to Saltfleet and North Somercotes. This is because the nature of the coast, its natural processes, human geography and economy is very different from the Wash, with correspondingly different methods of coastal management and differing forecast climatic responses. Broadly the area should extend inland to the foot of the Wolds, to link in with current coastal and fluvial flood risk mapping.

In terms of public engagement, a series of prior engagement exercises have been carried out to inform coastal management policies and plans since 2012, including:

- 2008-2009 Stakeholder consultation on Coastal Study (intended to lead to a coastal strategy as part of regional planning)
- 2011-12 Stakeholder and public consultation on policies for Shoreline Management Plan
- 2011-12 Stakeholder and public consultation on emergency planning and potential evacuation of coastal area in emergency situations
- 2016-19 Stakeholder and public consultation on Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point Strategy

It is suggested that further direct public consultation would reveal little new information and would be unlikely to ask significantly different questions of local communities. The results of these completed exercises should be taken forward and inform the overall direction of the strategic approach through incorporation of existing, ongoing initiatives, and through planned consultation exercises, such as those shaping the review of East Lindsey District Council's Local Plan.

At this point it is envisaged that the strategic approach should be a short document, with a small number of core objectives covering a timescale of the next 50-100 years. It should act as a unifying framework, delivered through more detailed initiatives (such as the Gibraltar Point to Saltfleet Strategy and East Lindsey's Local Plan Review and the national Town Fund), and should have clearly articulated measures so that progress towards the objectives can be identified.

It should provide a bridge between countywide objectives – for example in the LCC's emerging Corporate Plan – and a more distinctive application of those objectives within the specific coastal setting. Success for the strategy will be measured in terms of its adoption as a key document by partners and it will act as evidence of joint working between the District Council, County Council, Environment Agency and other partners in working together to achieve a shared vision and set of objectives for the coast.

### **Timescales**

It is intended to develop the strategic approach with the aim of completion in late 2020, in time for the commencement of the Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point Strategy in April 2021 and in alignment with major projects such as the Local Plan review. Preparation of a first draft document in mid-February will commence a period of iterative comment and review, with the aim of producing a reasonably full draft by August 2021.

## **2. Conclusion**

Implementation of a shared strategic approach for the coast of Lincolnshire offers the possibility of establishing a new basis for providing large-scale flood defence structures through a clear approach to the economic, social and environmental vision for a large area of the county.

It provides an opportunity to showcase sustainable place-shaping for the future in a highly challenging environment, and it has the potential to unlock increased investment and growth in the coastal areas of the county, generating the added value that will help to boost investment in ongoing coastal management.

With the forthcoming 2021 Year of the Coast initiative and the UK's hosting of COP26, there is also a significant opportunity to showcase sustainable place-shaping for the future in a highly challenging environment.

### **3. Consultation**

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

No

#### **b) Risks and Impact Analysis**

Risk analysis is undertaken at programme and project level. Cumulative risk and impact will be reviewed as the strategy develops and the details of particular programmes and projects are developed.

### **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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