

# DECISION ITEM



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE	9 MARCH 2017	6
<b>BLUE FLAG BEACH AWARD</b>			

## PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY

In February 2016, Council agreed the new Corporate Plan which runs from 2016 to 2020. The plan contains five themes. Two of the priorities over the next four years under the theme 'Clean and Green' is 'Strive to achieve Blue Flag status for the beaches', and "Ensure beaches and bathing waters are clean and safe".

This report details the Blue Flag criteria and what requirements would need to be fulfilled by the Council to achieve Blue Flag Award accreditation for the two beaches in St. Annes. The report describes the current standard of each beach, current provision of facilities and the impact of bathing water quality on any award application.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tourism and Leisure Committee is requested:

1. To assess the list of requirements that would need to be fulfilled to allow a competent application for Blue Flag accreditation for the two beaches.
2. To decide if the proposed list of requirements are to be further detailed and costed, to be presented in a further report to the Committee.
3. To offer 'in principal' support to any future capital bids and/or revenue increases based on a more detailed list of requirements in a future report.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

No Previous Decisions

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	✓
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	✓
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	✓
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	✓
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	✓

## REPORT

### BACKGROUND

1. In February 2016, Council agreed the new Corporate Plan which runs from 2016 to 2020. The plan contains five themes. Two of the priorities over the next four years under the theme 'Clean and Green' is 'Strive to achieve Blue Flag status for the beaches', and 'Ensure beaches and bathing waters are clean and safe'.
2. The Council has 2 public beaches – St. Annes Pier Beach that stretches from the RNLI slipway behind the boating pool to the toilet block at North Promenade Car Park and St. Annes North Beach which stretches from opposite Sandgate to the Coast Guard Station, North Beach Car Park.

### SEASIDE AWARD

3. The Pier beach has achieved the Seaside Award in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2015 and 2016. During the other years the water quality did not achieve the minimum water quality standard, and therefore an application for the award was not submitted.
4. Keep Britain Tidy's Seaside Award celebrates the quality and diversity of England's coastline. Formerly called the Quality Coast Award, the scheme is the nationwide standard for the best beaches across the UK. While Seaside Award beaches can be vastly different, the flag is a symbol of quality which ensures visitors are guaranteed to find a clean, safe, attractive and well-managed coastal stretch. At a time when more and more people are choosing to holiday closer to home, the Seaside Award is vital in ensuring visitors know they are enjoying the best of our delightful and dramatic coastline. The Seaside Award is specially designed to recognise all the different uses of our coastline.

### BLUE FLAG AWARD

5. North Beach has never been submitted for any award. However, as the bathing water quality achieved "Excellent" status in 2015, it was seen as an opportunity to prepare a Blue Flag application. The bathing water quality has since reduced to "Good", due to several external factors which are listed in the report.
6. The Blue Flag is a certification by the Foundation of Environmental Education (FEE), "that a beach, marina or sustainable boating tourism operator meets its stringent standards".
7. The Blue Flag is a trademark owned by the FEE, which is a not-for-profit, non- governmental organisation, consisting of 65 organisations in 60 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, North America and South America. The criteria include standards for water quality, safety, environmental education and information, the provision of specific services and general environmental management criteria.
8. The Blue Flag award is widely considered to be the Gold Standard for beaches and is internationally recognised. In 2015 there were 4,266 Blue Flags around the world. There are currently 199 Blue Flags flying in the British Isles (UK & Ireland).
9. The Blue Flag Programme is run by Keep Britain Tidy, who are a UK based independent environmental charity, established in 1955 as an anti-litter campaign. In 1987 they became the Tidy Britain group and changed again in 2002 to Encams (Environmental Campaigns), returning back to Keep Britain Tidy in 2009.
10. Keep Britain Tidy run a number of Environmental Programmes including: Eco schools, seaside awards, beachcare, rivercare, watersidecare, LOVEmyBEACH, Love parks, Big Tidy Up, Green Flag awards for parks & open spaces and Blue Flag for Beaches.

11. Applications are made annually in January. The certification process is carried out each year and beaches can lose or gain a Blue Flag. In the UK results are announced in June.
12. The actual benefits of Blue Flag on local tourism cannot be accurately estimated, however research by Keep Britain Tidy shows that visitors prefer visiting beaches that demonstrate high quality standards in the Blue Flag key areas: Provision of Information, Bathing Water Quality, Environmental Management, Safety and Management.
13. Keep Britain Tidy list the 4 main advantages on achieving and retaining Blue Flag status to be:
  - A better quality of environment which gives visitors to your beaches a superior experience, therefore by increasing their profile
  - Protection from the local environment from the destabilising effects of unmanaged practices
  - An opportunity for the region to capitalise on this reputation for environmental protection and market itself as such a destination
  - A higher standard of environment for local people and the associated health benefits

#### BLUE FLAG AWARD CRITERIA (ENGLAND)

14. The following criteria must be fully met to achieve Blue Flag status:

##### Environmental Education and Information

- Information about the Blue Flag must be displayed at the beach.
- Environmental education activities must be offered and promoted to beach users.
- Information about bathing water quality must be displayed.
- Information relating to local eco-systems and environmental phenomena must be displayed.
- A map of the beach indicating different facilities must be displayed.
- A code of conduct that reflects appropriate laws governing the use of the beach and surrounding areas must be displayed.

##### Water Quality

- The beach must fully comply with the water quality sampling and frequency requirements.
- The beach must fully comply with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis.
- No industrial, waste-water or sewage-related discharges should affect the beach area.
- The beach must achieve 'excellent' water quality as set out in the Bathing Water Directive.

##### Environmental Management

- The local authority / beach operator should establish a beach management committee.
- The local authority / beach operator must comply with all regulations affecting the location and operation of the beach.
- The beach must be clean.
- Algae vegetation or natural debris should be left on the beach (exceptions apply).
- Bins must be available at the beach and they must be regularly emptied.
- Facilities for the separation of recyclable waste materials should be available at the beach.
- Toilet facilities must be provided.
- The toilet or restroom facilities must be kept clean.
- The toilet or restroom facilities must have controlled sewage disposal.
- There should be no unauthorised camping, driving or dumping of waste on the beach.
- During the bathing season dogs must be excluded from the award area of the beach.
- All buildings and beach equipment must be properly maintained.
- Coral reefs in the vicinity of the beach must be monitored.
- A sustainable means of transportation should be promoted in the beach area.

## Safety and Services

- If appropriate, an adequate number of lifeguards and/or lifesaving equipment must be available at the beach.
- First aid equipment must be available on the beach.
- Emergency plans to cope with pollution risks must be in place.
- There must be management of beach users and events to prevent conflicts and accidents.
- There must be safety measures in place to protect beach users.
- A supply of drinking water should be available at the beach.
- Wheelchair access and accessibility features must be in place for at least one Blue Flag beach in each municipality.

## CURRENT POSITION

15. As stated St. Annes Pier Beach currently holds a Seaside Award, with St. Annes North Beach not currently holding any award.
16. A Seaside Award can be achieved if the bathing water quality is to a “Sufficient” standard under the current EU Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC, and all the other criteria is met including cleanliness, provision of facilities, management, safety and relevant provision of information.
17. However, to gain Blue Flag accreditation the bathing water quality must be classed as “Excellent” under the EU Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC.
18. To put this into perspective there are 4 quality standards in the Directive – Excellent, Good, Sufficient and Poor.
19. Bathing water is subject to short term pollution. Short term pollution is caused when heavy rainfall washes faecal material into the sea from livestock, sewage and urban drainage via rivers and streams. The risk of encountering reduced water quality increases after rainfall and typically returns to normal after 1-3 days. The Environment Agency makes daily pollution risk forecasts based on rainfall patterns and will issue a pollution risk warning if heavy rainfall occurs to enable bathers to avoid periods of increased risk. The Environment Agency works to reduce the sources of this pollution through pollution prevention measures, work with agriculture and water companies. 41 warnings advising against swimming due to an increase risk of short term pollution were issued in 2016 for St Annes bathing water. These warnings were issued because of the effects of heavy rain and high tides on the water quality.

## BATHING WATER QUALITY

20. The main objective of the Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC is to protect public health and the environment from faecal pollution at bathing waters. The Environment Agency establish a monitoring calendar and take 20 bathing water samples during the bathing season.
21. The Bathing season at Fylde runs from 1st May – 30th September. Fylde have two bathing waters:- St Annes Pier & St Annes North.
22. The Environment Agency have been working with Fylde since 2014, to improve bathing water quality and has been making regular predictions of pollution risks at the borough’s two bathing waters. Signs have been displayed when a risk of increased pollution has been expected, which can be short term pollution events that last for less than 72 hours.
23. Where pollution forecasts have coincided with statutory bathing water sampling there is a potential for discounting samples at the end of each season under The Bathing Water Regulation 2013, 12(5). No more than 3 samples can be discounted in a bathing season.
24. Signs have been displayed at Fylde Beaches during Short Term Pollution Events, to protect public health and the environment from faecal pollution at bathing waters.

25. The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 allow the Environment Agency to determine the relevant assessment period where it considers that the profile of a bathing water has changed. These are the recent catchment changes that affect Fylde's bathing waters

Improvement work completed prior to the 2014

- Delivery of the Preston 7 scheme – the Preston Tunnels
  - Delivery of the Preston 32 of which 12 outputs had bathing water drivers
  - Provision of ultra-violet (UV) disinfection at Blackburn Wastewater Treatment Works.
26. These improvement works were considered to affect the classification of St Annes Pier and St Annes North Bathing Waters.
27. The current Bathing Water Standards at the time of writing this report are:
- St. Anne Pier Beach - Good
  - St. Annes North Beach - Good
28. Improvement of Bathing Water Quality is a corporate objective. Officers from Technical Services are working in partnership with the Environment Agency and numerous external partners to improve the bathing water quality at both beaches. UU are currently working with the farmers / landowners along the Fylde coastline to see if any improvements can be made.
29. The tables in appendix 1 refer to the Pier Beach and North Beach and show what requirements will need to be fulfilled against each of the Blue Flag criteria with an estimated revenue or capital cost against each item, and how these items could be potentially funded.

IMPLICATIONS			
Finance	None arising directly from this report		
Legal	None		
Community Safety	None		
Human Rights and Equalities	None		
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None		
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None		
LEAD AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Mark Wilde	01253 658475	16 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Corporate Plan 2016-20	8 Feb 2016	<a href="http://www.fylde.gov.uk/council/performance/">http://www.fylde.gov.uk/council/performance/</a>

## Appendix 1

Table of Requirements for St. Annes North Beach

Table of Requirements for St. Annes Pier Beach