

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF PLACE AND CULTURE	COUNCIL	18 DECEMBER 2023	10

FUNDED BUDGET INCREASE TO DELIVER THE FYLDE SAND DUNES PROJECT

PUBLIC ITEM

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

RELEVANT LEAD MEMBER

This item is within the remit of Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Culture (Councillor Jayne Nixon).

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Fylde Council has successfully led a partnership with Blackpool Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust in the management of the Fylde Sand Dunes Project since 2012, ensuring the protection and improvement of the dune habitat in its role as soft sea defence and nationally significant conservation area.

Environment Agency grant funding to the total value of £999,000 was secured in 2022/23 by the partnership to continue the project and associated staff and operational costs. The funding will be utilised to fund the project delivery team as well as manage and improve over 80 hectares of dune estate which includes a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, County Biological Heritage Sites and Local Nature Reserve. There is no requirement for supplementary external funding for the project.

Further to an operational and service review carried out by the partnership in January 2017, it was agreed that Fylde Council were best equipped to deliver the operational elements of the project directly, and therefore the project staff would be best employed directly by Fylde Council. Blackpool Council, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Fylde Council co-led on the wider strategy, policy and development of the project.

The Environment Agency grant of £999,000 will be split accordingly between Blackpool Council, Fylde Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust. Fylde council will receive an operational grant of £232,338 which will be paid in annual increments until 2026/ 2027. The funding will be used to continue the employment of an existing fixed term Area Conservation Ranger and Conservation Operative, who will deliver actions and objectives defined in the grant conditions from the Environment Agency and Fylde Sand Dunes Management Action Plan. This report provides details of the project background and process for delivery as well as a cost breakdown for the scheme.

RECOVERABILITY

This decision is not recoverable because it relates to a recommendation to the council.

RECOMMENDATION

1. To approve a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £232,338 (paid in annual increments until 2026/2027) to be met from the Environmental Agency grant relating to the Fylde Sand Dunes Project

BACKGROUND

1. The dunes are of national ecological importance, providing habitat for a wide range of protected species. The dune estate has a number of national legal designations, including Site of Special Scientific Interest, County Biological Heritage Site and Local Nature Reserve. They adjoin the internationally protected Ribble and Alt Estuary Special Protection Area. The dunes also provide valuable open space for tourism and recreation.
2. The Fylde Coast has 18km of coastline stretching from Starr Gate to Savick Brook and consists of a mix of natural and built coastal defences which defend properties from coastal erosion and flooding. The section of dunes north of St. Anne's Pier provides some protection, however they are highly vulnerable and if not managed correctly, risk of coastal erosion and flooding would increase. The dunes to the south of St. Anne's Pier are afforded some protection by strategic headlands which support good beach levels and provide erosion protection to nearby properties and the Ribble Estuary.
3. The Northwest England and North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) is part of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management planning framework. The SMP2 sets the long term policy for the management of the coast and is delivered through shoreline strategies and projects. The short term SMP2 policy (to 2030) for the dunes between Squires Gate and St. Annes Pier is for managed realignment to allow for the management of the dunes as a natural sea defence system and to sustain protected habitats. Longer term SMP2 policies are to 'hold the line' by managing the dunes as the primary coastal defence and maintaining secondary defences to an adequate standard.
4. In 2010, Cabinet adopted the Sand Dunes Management Plan with the following aims:
 - Improve the efficiency of the dunes and salt marsh as soft sea-defences
 - Enhance the conservation interest of the coastal habitats and of the Ribble Estuary
 - Enhance public appreciation and enjoyment of the dunes
5. In 2012, Blackpool Council in partnership with Fylde Council and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, secured £470,000 of funding from the Environment Agency to deliver the aims of the Fylde Sand Dune Management Plan. A steering group was established, who continue to meet on a quarterly basis and includes representation from Fylde Council, Blackpool Council, The Environment Agency, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Natural England. Since 2012, significant progress has been made since the project inception, including the widening of the dunes towards the sea and undertaking large-scale dune stabilisation and restoration work. The project has also encouraged community involvement through environmental education initiatives, volunteering opportunities and an annual programme of events. In December 2017, a further £717,000 in grant funding was secured from the Environment Agency by the partnership, to enable the continuation of the Fylde Sand Dunes Project.

NEXT PROJECT PHASE

6. The aims and objectives for the next project phase will be outlined in an updated Fylde Sand Dunes Management Plan, and will include further dune protection, accretion and stabilisation work, habitat management and community engagement through volunteering, events and education programmes. The dune management plan is a compulsory requirement of the funding provider and will be linked with the newly emerging Fylde Council Beach Management Plan.
7. The management mechanism for the delivery of the Fylde Sand Dunes Project is stipulated within a Memorandum of Understanding and can be described as follows:
 - a. Fylde Council are responsible for the operational delivery of the project, employing two staff including and dunes specific Area Conservation Ranger and Assistance Conservation Operative, on a fix term contract. The two staff are based at Snowdon Road Depot and are integrated into the Council's Parks & Coastal Services team. They undertake all dune related maintenance and specialist conservation work and report to the Senior Coast and Conservation Officer.
 - b. The Lancashire Wildlife Trust are responsible for the development aspects of the project, employing one Dunes Project Officer, who leads on dune related education programmes, Beach School Programmes, event coordination, community engagement and promotions. The officer is based at Snowdon Road Depot.

- c. Blackpool Council oversee the project management which include finance management and funding allocation, administration and the production of quarterly project and financial reports to fulfil the requirements of the grant provider.

PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN

FYLDE SAND DUNES PROJECT	
REVENUE	
Staffing and fleet	TOTAL REVENUE: £232,338

OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Corporate priority: Environment

- Effective delivery of the Fylde Coastal Strategy.
- Ensure beaches and bathing waters are clean and safe.
- Ensure the security of the coastal defences.

Corporate priority: Tourism

- Support and promote volunteers' efforts to improve their local community.
- Deliver activities for all age groups.
- Recognise the significance of our heritage assets.
- Work with partners to improve health and wellbeing of all residents.
- Maximise the natural assets of our coast and countryside by improving their facilities.

Provide a positive first impression of Fylde.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	✓

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The report seeks approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £232,338 (paid in annual increments until 2026/2027) to be met from the Environmental Agency grant relating to the Fylde Sand Dunes Project.
Legal	None arising from this report.
Community Safety	The project will ensure the long-term protection and management of Fylde's sand dunes as a vital soft sea defence for coastal properties.
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising from this report.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	The project will ensure the long-term sustainability of Fylde's sand dunes as a soft coastal defence and statutory designated ecological asset.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising from this report.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Tourism and Leisure Committee 19th June 2017.

1. To recommend to Full Council approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £238,256 (paid in annual increments up to 2022) to be met from the Environmental Agency grant relating to the Fylde Sand Dunes Project; and

To authorise the proposed expenditure in respect of the project in the total sum of £238,256 as detailed within this report, subject to the subsequent approval by Council of the fully funded revenue budget increase for the scheme as detailed at 1 above.

BACKGROUND PAPERS REVELANT TO THIS ITEM

Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
None		

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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