



DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE	22 JUNE 2017	6
THE FYLDE SAND DUNES PROJECT UPDATE			

PUBLIC ITEM

SUMMARY

Fylde Council has successfully led a partnership with Blackpool Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust in the management of the Fylde Sand Dunes since 2008, 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 in the sum of £717,000 was secured in December 2016 by the partnership to continue the project and associated staff and operational costs for a further five years. The funding will be utilised to fund the project 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. The project staff are currently employed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

Further to an operational and service review carried out by the partnership in January 2017, it has been agreed that Fylde Council are best 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 will now co-lead on the wider strategy, policy and development of the project.

The Environment Agency grant of £717,000 will be split accordingly between Blackpool Council, Fylde Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust. Fylde Council will receive an operational grant of £238,000 (split between the years 2017/18 to 2021/22).

The Committee are requested to authorise the commencement of the project and to approve the necessary expenditure detailed in this report, dependent upon the approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £238,256 at the meeting of Full Council on 17 July 2017.

The funding will be used to employ a fixed term Area Conservation Ranger and Conservation Operative, who will continue to deliver the actions and objectives defined in the grant condition 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tourism and Leisure Committee are requested:

1. To recommend to Full Council approval of a fully-funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £238,256 (split between the years 2017/18 to 2021/22) to be met from the Environmental Agency grant relating to the Fylde Sand Dunes Project; and
2. 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.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Cabinet - 17th February 2010

Fylde Sand Dunes Management Action Plan- Consultation and Clarification Report Recommended:

1. The adoption of the Fylde Dunes Management Action Plan

In reaching its decision, Cabinet considered the details set out in the report before it and at the meeting and **RESOLVED** to note and approve the recommendations made by the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.

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)	✓

BACKGROUND

1. 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 dune north of St. Anne's pier is a long wide stretch, which provides some protection, however these dunes are highly vulnerable and if not managed correctly, the risk of coastal erosion and flooding would be increased. 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.
2. The sand 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.
3. The North West 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 surrounding habitats 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 for a 5 year period 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.

PROJECT OUTLINE

6. In December 2016, 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 for a further 5 years. The aims and objectives for the next project phase will be outlined in an updated Fylde Sand Dunes Management Plan 2017 – 2022, and will include further dune accretion and stabilisation, habitat management, improvement of the visitor centre, installation of newly designed access, way-marking and signage as well as ambitious volunteering, events and education programmes.
7. The current management and delivery for the Fylde Sand Dunes Project was assessed in January 2017 with Blackpool Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust. Under the current arrangement all the project staff are employed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, including development officers and operational staff.
8. The project review proposed two key changes to the current arrangement:
 - a. That the project would benefit from increased managerial and operational input from Fylde Council
 - b. That physical project delivery would benefit if the two operational staff are employed directly by Fylde Council on a fixed term contract, to allow better integration into the Coast & Conservation team to give the opportunity to improve operational efficiency and health and safety
9. Blackpool Council, Fylde Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust all agreed in a need for a review of the long standing agreements and arrangements, to allow for the two key changes above.
10. It was also agreed by the wider project steering group that the delivery of the project would be shared more evenly between Fylde Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust.
11. It is proposed that the operational responsibilities of the project will formally transfer to Fylde Council, including the budget relating to the existing Area Conservation Ranger and Conservation Operative and associated operational budgets. Lancashire Wildlife Trust will continue to lead on the development aspects of the project through the existing Fylde Sand Dunes Project Officer and retain the development budget. Blackpool Council will continue to oversee the administration of the project, including the production of quarterly project and financial reports to fulfil the requirements of the grant provider.

CURRENT POSITION

12. The Fylde Sand Dune Project is still being delivered under the original agreement. The next stage is for the Parks and Coastal Services team to appoint both an Area Conservation Ranger and Conservation Operative on a 5 year fixed term contract, to continue the next operational phase of the project and deliver the key actions within the 2017 – 2022 Fylde Sand Dunes Project Management Plan.
13. The project staff will be based at Snowdon Road Depot and will report to the Senior Coast and Conservation Officer, working as part of a restructured and wider Coast & Conservation Team. Job descriptions and person specifications for both posts have been produced and have been graded through job evaluation.

PROJECT COST BREAKDOWN

FYLDE SAND DUNES PROJECT	
REVENUE	
Staffing and Operational Costs	Year 1 2017/18 - £44,439 Year 2 2018/19 - £46,065 Year 3 2019/20 - £47,825 Year 4 2020/21 - £49,754 Year 5 2021/22 - £50,173
TOTAL REVENUE COSTS £238,256	

OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Corporate priority: Green and Clean

- 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: A Great Place to Live

- 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.

Corporate priority: A Great Place to Visit

- Maximise the natural assets of our coast and countryside by improving their facilities.
- Provide a positive first impression of Fylde.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The Tourism & Leisure Committee are asked to authorise the proposed expenditure as detailed in the report in the total sum of £238,256 to be met from the Environmental Agency grant relating to the Fylde Sand Dunes Project, dependent upon the approval by Full Council on 17 July 2017 of the fully-funded revenue budget increase for the scheme.
Legal	No implications arising from this report.
Community Safety	The project will ensure the long term protection and management of Fylde's sand dunes as a soft sea defence for coastal properties as well as enhance visitor experience.
Human Rights and Equalities	No implications 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	No implications arising from this report.

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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