

## **Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel**

<b>DATE</b>	03/10/2024
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Cllr Henry Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Kath Jickells, Assistant Director, Environment
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Cleethorpes Boating Lake and Dynamic Understanding of the Natural Environment (DUNE) Project Update
<b>STATUS</b>	Open Report – Closed Appendix

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

North East Lincolnshire's Council Plan 2023-26 sets out our aim to balance economic growth with the green agenda, making sure that we take our community with us and enable the best outcomes for the families that live, work, and visit here. This vision is outlined in strategic documents including the Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan, Cleethorpes Masterplan, Carbon Road Map, Natural Assets Plan and Creativity Strategy.

This report provides an update on the Cleethorpes Boating Lake. The Cleethorpes Boating Lake is a key area in North East Lincolnshire for Tourism and Recreation and is located next to the internationally important Humber Estuary. The Humber Estuary is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), European Marine Site (EMS) and Ramsar Site. The boating lake provides a key strategic role in adding to our resort offer for tourism, economy and growth while also serving as a key area of recreation, which can help reduce recreational pressures on the Cleethorpes Section of the Internationally designated Humber Estuary.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the management of the Cleethorpes Boating Lake. It also informs this panel about a project that we are currently seeking grant funding to understand why people visit the area, how it is used, what their understanding of the significance of the area directly adjacent to the boating lake is, and how improvements can be made to the boating lake to encourage increased footfall and tourism in this area, whilst reducing the recreational pressures on the coastline.

### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

The Economy, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Panel is asked to note the progress of the management of the boating lake and provide its support for the Cleethorpes Dynamic Understanding of the Natural Environment (DUNE) project National Lottery Heritage Funding bid.

## 1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1. As one of the Boroughs most used open spaces by both tourists and visitors, Cleethorpes Boating Lake is one of the most important heritage assets in North East Lincolnshire. The Boating Lake was built in 1928 and is located adjacent to the internationally important heritage asset, the Humber Estuary.
- 1.2. There have been several challenges around the management of the Boating Lake in recent years due to its age and design. These challenges have included a build-up of sediment over the years which has led to a decreased water level in the boating lake causing it to dry up easily during drought conditions. There has also been poor aeration in the boating lake further increasing sediment build up, causing the water to become murky and reducing the biodiversity of the lake.
- 1.3. The lake was originally designed to be drained and cleaned on an annual basis to avoid sediment buildup, however, there are no records of the Boating Lake being drained since the Second World War, leading to the buildup of Sediment over many years. This has caused issues for the boat operator and boat users who have raised concerns about the buildup of sediment and water levels of the Boating Lake.
- 1.4. The Boating Lake has also become home to numerous resident wildfowl. While it is important to protect the bird populations of the Humber Estuary, the regular feeding of birds with bread by visitors has caused a large buildup of wildfowl around the lake. This creates another management challenge as it has caused damage to grassland and the large buildup of bird fouling on pathways.
- 1.5. To manage these challenges, officers have undertaken daily cleaning of pathways, and a fountain and reed baskets have been added to the Boating Lake to improve the aeration and improve biodiversity. Water levels are also checked daily by officers, with officers pumping water out of the Boating Lake if there is an overflow and opening the borehole inlet if there is too little water.
- 1.6. Pumping system and water fountains are checked and maintained by external pumping contractors. All filters for infalls leading into the Boating Lake are also cleaned by NELC Officers.
- 1.7. Alongside these measures, officers carry out routine maintenance and checks of the Boating Lake which includes:
  - hedgerow flailing once per year
  - Grass cutting by both triple ride on mowers and a tractor with gang mowers

on a 10–14-day schedule

- Shrub Pruning on an annual basis
- Repairs and maintenance to all pathways and handrails
- Routine waste collections
- Bridge inspections and maintenance
- Routine inspection and repairs of benches and knee-high railing
- Scheduled weed spraying
- Inspection of Trees and actioned works
- Cutting of the SSSI area south of the Boating Lake

1.8. Officers have explored options to de-silt the Boating Lake, and this would be at a significant cost to the authority due to the cost of transportation and disposal of waste at the site (see closed appendix). Desilting the Lake on its own would also not prevent future siltation buildup unless the Lake was drained annually as it was originally designed to be. Furthermore, this would not address any of the additional challenges in managing Cleethorpes Boating Lake.

1.9. While exploring options to de-silt, the Boating Lake, officers visited Boultham Park in Lincoln which was part of a National Heritage Lottery Funded Programme which took a visitor/community approach to designing the urban park and lake ([Boultham Park Project](#)).

1.10. The Boultham Park project also takes a wider area-based approach rather than focusing on one asset which was the inspiration for NELC to take a similar approach with the Cleethorpes Boating Lake. We want to ensure that any approach we take can future proof the boating lake for future generations and that our efforts to improve the area are informed by the communities, visitors and local businesses that we want to enjoy it.

1.11. Officers also accompanied representatives from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) on a site visit to the boating lake and saltmarsh, sharing with them our aspirations for a project, the importance of the boating lake as a heritage asset and our role in protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

1.12. This is particularly relevant to NELC as the proximity of the Boating Lake to the designated sites of the Humber Estuary means NELC must take a wider approach in managing this important Natural Heritage Asset and Tourist destination park.

1.13. As a Competent Authority, NELC have a statutory duty to protect our natural environment, increase biodiversity and protect, enhance and maintain our designated sites.

1.14. Through our work with Heritage England and our newly announced status as a Heritage Place, we have identified an opportunity to align our continued efforts with the environmental ambitions of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and apply for grant funding to build the foundations to create a worldclass partnership to protect and enhance Cleethorpes' Saltmarsh. This approach has generated significant support from partner agencies such as Natural England, National Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB and Humber Nature Partnership, whose input will be integral to a successful outcome.

1.15. On the advice of NLHF, we plan to structure the project in multiple phases submitting a bid for each phase. Each phase will take multiple years and so this project will be a multi-year project with 2028 being the targeted and earliest completion date for the project. This funding will support stakeholder engagement, consultation, education and communication around our natural environment, unlocking the potential for future project ready grant funded opportunities. This is the scoping phase of the project which will be used as the evidence base to support future project development and delivery.

1.16. Specific Phase 1 activity includes:

For the first phase of the project, applicants can apply for up to £250,000. This will include:

- a) The creation of new partnerships between NELC and stakeholders including Natural England, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Humber Nature Partnership, the voluntary sector and local community groups.
- b) The appointment of a Research and Engagement Officer to lead on community engagement and co-ordinate partnership work with stakeholders.
- c) The appointment of an additional Resort Warden to regularly patrol the more sensitive areas of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and feed into wider conversations about managing and reporting incidents of recreational disturbance.
- d) Through effective engagement and collaboration, seek to improve knowledge and understanding of the habitats and species within the designated areas through the development of an education, communication and engagement programme for the community.
- e) Identifying opportunities to enhance alternative recreational space to reduce the pressures on the designated sites, potentially improving and enhancing Cleethorpes Boating Lake and the surrounding area.
- f) Stakeholder engagement, and consultation to build on key partnerships and identify opportunities for partner organisations, recreational user groups, local business, community groups and the voluntary sector to be involved in protecting and enhancing the area and increasing knowledge and awareness of our natural heritage asset.

- g) Development of an Eco-tourism Plan to help promote the importance of the designated features, while encouraging economic growth for Cleethorpes all year round.

1.17. The project is centred around Cleethorpes Resort, south of Cleethorpes Leisure Centre, and includes the Boating Lake area within its scope. The project aims are to:

- a) Protect our nationally important species and habitats from harm, damage, disturbance or decline.
- b) Improve and enhance the biodiversity of the immediate and surrounding area.
- c) Reduce the recreational pressures to the designated sites by providing and enhancing alternative recreational options and spaces.
- d) Realise and promote the economic, social and health benefits of a high-quality environment.
- e) Promote the environmental benefits of the saltmarsh and its role in mitigating the effects of climate change.
- f) Connecting people to nature.

1.18. The project will support our strategic environmental priorities outlined in the Council Plan, Natural Assets Plan and Cabon Roadmap in addition to supporting our tourism and regeneration efforts, our Creativity Strategy and supporting our mitigation strategy to the Local Plan through activities outlined in the Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan (CHMP).

1.19. The project will also align with Lottery Heritage Fund's 2023-2033 strategy which focuses on 4 key principles:

- **Saving heritage:** conserving and valuing heritage, for now and the future.
- **Protecting the environment:** supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability.
- **Inclusion, access and participation:** supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage.
- **Organisational sustainability:** strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.

1.20. The successful award and delivery of the scoping phase of the DUNE project would enable NELC to progress future funding bid phases, which would incorporate resident, visitor and stakeholder feedback from this phase of the project. These bids would use the data obtained in the scoping phase to design and deliver later phases of the DUNE project, which would look at how we can protect our heritage asset of Cleethorpes Beach while ensuring sustainable

access for all users and maximising nearby open space assets, such as Cleethorpes Boating Lake, as an alternative recreational space.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1. The Cleethorpes DUNE project provides opportunities to conserve and enhance our natural heritage asset of the Cleethorpes Coastline while providing access to our natural heritage, particularly to those who have barriers to accessing natural heritage across the borough. The project presents the opportunity to enhance our visitor offer and experience in a sustainable manner that delivers on the asks of multiple stakeholders and users for this area of North East Lincolnshire.
- 2.2. If the project bid is not successful it is likely that in the absence of additional funding, any work detailed within the project bid phases including any additional works involving the Cleethorpes Boating Lake, will need to be carried out at a cost to the local authority. This will impact on the current service levels dedicated to Sustainability, Ecology, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing and Resort Team activity. There is, however, no existing dedicated financial resource allocated to deliver a project of this nature.

## **3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1. There are potential positive reputational implications for the council resulting from the delivery of this project, if successful in our funding bid. This is due to the opportunity to enhance and protect our coastline further, which further demonstrates the council's commitment to improve biodiversity and uphold the ecological and environmental designations of our coastline. Further positive reputational implications for the council could result from positive engagement with all stakeholders, visitors and residents whereby their views directly input into the development of future phases of the project. This is not without risk as should the council engage and not consider stakeholder views; this could have negative reputational implications.
- 3.2. An action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service covering the Council's legal obligations to protect and uphold the ecological and environmental designations of the Cleethorpes Coastline. The action plan will also cover requirements of the stakeholder and public consultation and engagement during the project.

## **4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1. The Cleethorpes DUNE project scoping phase, if successful will provide £250,000 of funding for the Council to deliver this element of the project (See closed Appendix). There is no expected impact on Council revenue or capital expenditure as project cost will be fully funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The only resource implication expected of the project is existing officer's time to deliver and monitor the progress of elements of the project. This will be factored into and covered by existing budgets.
- 4.2. While the scoping phase of the project is not expected to have any impact on

income generation, successful delivery of all phases of the DUNE project could see increased revenue through increased tourism and Eco-tourism into the resort.

## **5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

The DUNE project will deliver access to the coastline for children and young people who do not currently have access to it across the borough. This will provide educational opportunities and potential health benefits to children and young people by connecting them with our natural heritage.

## **6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no expected negative environmental implications from the Cleethorpes DUNE project. The project aims to enhance biodiversity and protect our natural heritage and designated coastline. This will have a positive impact on the environment. There is no Biodiversity Net Gain implications expected from phase 1 of this project.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

(To be completed by Officer consulted).

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

(To be completed by Officer consulted).

## **9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

(To be completed by Officer consulted)

**Or, if the report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets), then sections 8, 9 and 10 can be replaced with the following:**

### **MONITORING COMMENTS**

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

## **10. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. Croft Baker and Haverstoe

## **11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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