

Communities Scrutiny Panel

DATE	08/01/2026
REPORT OF	Cllr Henry Hudson, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Carolina Borgstrom Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure
SUBJECT	DUNE Project
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

North East Lincolnshire's Council Plan 2025-2028 highlights our ambition to create a stronger economy, stronger communities and a greener future for all residents to enjoy.

DUNE 2 will build upon and advance the successes of the project's first phase, supporting the Council's vision for a stronger economy by contributing to the improvement of Cleethorpes and balancing the preservation of our natural heritage with the benefits brought by tourism in the Resort. The project will promote education around and enjoyment of our natural spaces, encouraging our community to spend time outside and share their stories of our coastline. In turn, this will support the goal of an accessible and engaging council by providing residents the opportunity to highlight what they value and would like to see in our area.

The project is closely aligned with the priority of a Greener Future and the management of our natural assets and coastline, with our Coastal Ranger and Research and Engagement Officer working closely with the community and partner organisations to help promote, preserve and protect the unique biodiversity found along the coastline and in the saltmarsh. It is also a key project supporting delivery of our Natural Assets Plan and Net Zero Carbon Roadmap.

DUNE is therefore most relevant to the following in the Place Based Outcomes Framework:

- All people in North East Lincolnshire benefit from a green economy and high quality environment,
- All people in North East Lincolnshire enjoy good health and wellbeing,
- All people in North East Lincolnshire live in a safe environment, can have their say about things that are important to them and participate fully in their communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North East Lincolnshire Council successfully applied for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to commence DUNE1, the first phase of a project aimed at raising awareness of, protecting, and enhancing our coastline and Cleethorpes

Nature Reserve. DUNE1 has seen significant successes, including the delivery of a range of public events and school engagement, the findings from which have been used to develop a further bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for DUNE2.

The following report provides an update on the progress of DUNE1 and details the intended aims and activities to be carried out in the project's second phase.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

That the progression of the DUNE Project to Phase 2 is considered by the panel.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1. As a Competent Authority, North East Lincolnshire Council have a statutory duty to protect our natural environment, increase biodiversity and protect, enhance and maintain our designated sites. The Humber Estuary is of significant ecological importance and is a designated:
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest,
 - Special Protection Area,
 - Special Area of Conservation,
 - European Marine Site,
 - Ramsar Site.
- 1.2. In 2023, the Heritage Fund identified several locations to receive targeted support and funding as part of their Heritage Places initiative. North East Lincolnshire Council was one of these locations, and a strong partnership between the authority and National Lottery Heritage Fund has allowed for a number of projects to be developed since.
- 1.3. North East Lincolnshire Council's then newly acquired status as a Heritage Place allowed for the opportunity to align our environmental ambitions with the priorities of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, seeking funding to protect and enhance our natural heritage and increase community engagement with our coastline. The ecological value of the Humber estuary and the unique saltmarsh habitat found in Cleethorpes provided an ideal focal point for a project.
- 1.4. Following the advice of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the DUNE project was planned to be split into two phases. Phase 1 is ongoing and was designed to support stakeholder engagement, consultation, education and communication around our natural environment in order to unlock the potential for future grant funding.
- 1.5. During DUNE Phase 1, North East Lincolnshire Council recruited a Coastal Ranger and a Research and Engagement Advisor who have been carrying out engagement activities with local residents, community groups, schools, and partner organisations. Events and activities have been positively received by the community, with strong levels of attendance at public events and school engagement sessions in particular. This has included:

- The delivery of five public events during the national Love Parks week, offering a range of activities including pond dipping, bug hunting and nature trails.
 - Popular activities such as our 'Coastal Curiosities' beach-combing event which promoted awareness of marine wildlife, encouraged citizen science reporting, and provided an opportunity for local children to enjoy our natural environment during their half-term holidays.
 - The delivery of nine guided walks and activities in our coastal areas, focussed on connecting local people with wildlife and allowing for discussions and connection with natural heritage.
 - Collaborative work with the Pier Gardens Regeneration Project to deliver two guided saltmarsh walks and creative workshops, one session of which was delivered with a local school, aimed at creating designs inspired by and using coastal plants as prints.
- 1.6. The Coastal Ranger also carries out patrols of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) feeding into work on the appropriate management of recreational disturbance and messaging on responsible use of the nature reserve. This supports North East Lincolnshire Council's statutory duties and addresses recommendations from Natural England around disturbance and damage to habitats.
- 1.7. A survey has been carried out as part of DUNE1 to gauge local people's awareness of the nature reserve, to better understand what people would like to see and know about the area, and to identify challenges and opportunities moving forward. This received a total of 614 responses. The lessons learned from the engagement sessions and the survey have and will continue to be used to inform the aims and activities to be carried out in DUNE Phase 2. This will ensure the project is carried out in tandem with the needs and desires of the local community, increasing their connection with nature and the local area.
- 1.8. The survey identified that there is limited awareness of the nature reserve and the designated value of our coastline. Engagement activities have also identified that there are residents interested in visiting the coastline but who face socioeconomic barriers that prevent them from doing so. Feedback has highlighted the desire from residents for more events and engagement, as well as a recognition that more needs to be done to protect our natural heritage. The survey has been used to develop an understanding of what visitors feel would be of benefit to our area including suggestions such as improved signage, improved facilities, a greater range of activities or things to see, and better access.
- 1.9. DUNE 2 will build on the findings above, continuing to raise awareness of Cleethorpes' natural heritage and developing partnerships between public, private, voluntary and community sector partners for collaboration. This will be done by retaining the Council's Coastal

Ranger and Engagement Officer to deliver the project.

1.10. The second phase will also aim to:

- Raise the profile of Cleethorpes Nature Reserve as part of the Lincolnshire Coronation Coast National Nature Reserve, creating a welcoming and informative space for visitors whilst protecting its unique natural heritage.
- Enhance the look and feel of the reserve to align with the wider National Nature Reserve, install interpretation boards and signage, and develop digital story mapping to share its rich natural and cultural history.
- Deliver an educational programme for schools, supported by a communications campaign and digital resources.
- Encourage ecotourism through an Eco-Tourism Plan, improved viewing infrastructure and facilities, and promotion via Visit Lincolnshire.
- Explore enhancements to surrounding green public spaces and transport links.
- Promote alternative recreational areas to reduce pressure on the reserve.
- Continue biodiversity monitoring to ensure environmental integrity throughout the project.

1.11. Consideration has been afforded to Cleethorpes Boating Lake and feedback has been received from residents and visitors regarding this area and its importance.

1.12. We are exploring options to address challenges at the Boating Lake, including the potential for a separate funding bid, to address these challenges.

1.13. DUNE 2 is intended to be carried out over a three-year period beginning, dependent upon successful application, in Summer 2026.

1.14. The project aims and actions outlined above support the delivery of the Council Plan, Natural Assets Plan and Cleethorpes Habitat Management Plan by encouraging engagement with our natural heritage, a shared connection between local people and their environment. This will have positive impacts on public health and wellbeing, support the preservation and improvement of our green spaces and biodiversity, and encourage the responsible use of our coastline aiding the Council in meeting its statutory duties on the designated areas and benefiting the Resort.

2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES

2.1. North East Lincolnshire Council have committed to work in partnership to protect and enhance our natural assets, through both the Council Plan

and the Natural Assets Plan. Feedback received during DUNE phase 1 has demonstrated public support for continued engagement on and around our coastline, reducing barriers to access and increasing education and responsible enjoyment of the natural environment. Our status as a Heritage Place affords us the opportunity to continue our work alongside the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a project which will benefit both the local community and our green and blue spaces, supporting delivery of our Council Plan vision.

- 2.2. As the Competent Authority, North East Lincolnshire Council has statutory duties regarding the designated areas. Failure to fulfil these duties may result in reputational and legal ramifications.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. As the Competent Authority, North East Lincolnshire Council has a duty to uphold the ecological and environmental designations of sites with special designations for nature. The Humber Estuary is of significant ecological importance and holds a number of designations as outlined above. Failure to appropriately manage and maintain those sites may result in prosecution.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. The project will not generate any significant financial implications for the Council. If successful following application, the project shall be funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project will therefore provide additional funding to support delivery of wide range of Council outcomes.
- 4.2. A council contribution shall be required in the form of officer time. The project will therefore have an implication on resource.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The project supports the delivery of our environmental strategies which aim to improve the environment for the benefit of our current and future generations. Continued engagement with young people, for example through community events and school engagement sessions, will enable children to have a voice in their community and provide an opportunity to increase their engagement with and education around the natural environment. The project will also encourage young people's awareness of and pride in the local area, with associated positive impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The project is closely aligned with North East Lincolnshire Council's environmental ambition of a Greener Future, supporting the delivery of our statutory responsibilities for designated areas and providing opportunities

to increase engagement with and understanding of our natural environment including the increasingly rare biodiversity found within the Saltmarsh habitat.

- 6.2. The project will therefore support the Council's environmental priorities:
- By supporting and developing the green economy and infrastructure,
 - By recognising and realising the economic and social benefits of a high quality environment.

7. 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.

8. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Croft Baker, Haverstoe and Sidney Sussex

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

(List the background papers/documents relevant to the report. Background papers are not to be confused with appendices. An example of background papers are previous Cabinet or Committee report, minutes, public consultation documents or publications. Web links should be provided and if the document is confidential or exempt from press and public, this should be stated.)

10. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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**COUNCILLOR HENRY HUDSON PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT
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