

# A Beach Management Plan for Thanet District Council

2014



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## 1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 The Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Thanet adopted by the Council in 2013 identified the beaches as the primary asset that the District has in its visitor offer. Its priorities included the aim to improve the day-to-day management of beaches and encourage new activities. The production of a Beach Management Plan was a recommendation of the DMP.

1.2 The Beach Management Plan is split broadly into three parts. Sections 4 and 5 of the Plan review the current situation. Sections 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 look at opportunities for improved management and development at Thanet's beaches to make the visitor offer exceptional and up-to-date. Section 11 contains information on the detailed Audit sheets that have been prepared for 17 of Thanet's beaches and which are included as Appendix 1.

### The Current Situation

1.3 The beaches are an integral part of what makes up the wider urban and rural landscape, and the overall visitor offer. They are distinct environments in their own right and have a role to play in a number of policy aspects, in particular in delivering key elements of the Council's Corporate Plan.

1.4 Throughout the preparation of the Plan and in the consultation and shaping of any new development ideas the principle of maintaining free public access to the promenades, beaches and sea has been paramount. Any management action or development must not compromise public access or the environmental quality of the beaches.

1.5 Thanet District Council is distinct in the number of beaches it has to manage, the overall length of coastline under its direct control, and consequently, the number and range of issues it has to deal with. The District has a substantial area of urban coastline. A large number of beaches suffer many of the problems and issues that arise from beaches being adjacent to large and diverse urban populations.

1.6 The Council is overwhelmingly the main provider of management services for the beaches. These include cleansing and litter collection, public toilets, seaweed removal, beach raking, sand bunding and levelling, infrastructure and buildings repair and maintenance, shelters and seats, signs, tidal pools, slipways, beach awards, and byelaw creation and enforcement. They employ a full time Foreshore Officer and Foreshore Inspector whose resources are stretched to cover all the beaches.

1.7 Part of the cleansing service and the toilet cleansing are contracted out. The rental and management of beach huts is contracted to Your Leisure (alongside some of the sport and leisure provision across the district). The Lifeguard service is contracted to the RNLI.

1.8 With the exception of a small number of freehold cafes the visitor services and facilities provided on beaches are in most cases delivered by concessionaires with leases or licences let and managed by the Council.

1.9 The length of time that Thanet’s beaches have been an attraction to visitors has meant that over the years a large number of concessions have been developed and let by the Council on differing terms, lease lengths and tenancy status and need considerable ongoing management.

1.10 Problems and costs of managing the beaches are compounded by the existence of a large amount of old, crumbling infrastructure; buildings that were built in the area’s tourism heyday and are suffering from age and the tough seaside environment. Many of the building are in need of major refurbishment or replacement.

1.11 Information gathered in developing the Plan allows a broad figure for the total cost of beach management to be set at £972,000 p.a. This is by no means an exact figure as a forensic examination of all budgets across the Council has not been carried out. It does not include for instance maintenance costs for Council buildings and infrastructure, legal and estates management, grants to Your Leisure to manage the beach hut service, and seaweed collection.

1.12 These costs are offset by estimated income of £164,575 for concessions, £62,800 from car parks serving specific beaches, and income from events and film/photo shoots. The rental of beach huts and plots also generates an income estimated to be c. £480,000 (offset by maintenance and staff costs) which accrues to Your Leisure and cross-subsidises other leisure services in the area.

1.13 In the course of producing the Beach Management Plan consultation took place to understand what the key issues are. There are a number of current matters which need addressing. The main problems and issues facing the management of the beaches are:

<b>Litter Collection and Cleansing</b>	<b>Anti Social Behaviour and Byelaw Enforcement</b>
<b>Public Toilets</b>	<b>Concession Leases and Licences</b>
<b>Cliff Lifts</b>	<b>Council Owned Buildings and Kiosks</b>
<b>Showers</b>	<b>Privately Owned Buildings and Structures</b>
<b>Beach Huts</b>	<b>Seaweed</b>
<b>Car Parking</b>	<b>Tidal Pools</b>
<b><i>The main Plan has more detail on the issues that need addressing</i></b>	

1.14 What is clear is that the Council faces mounting workloads and costs associated with beach management at a time when staff and budget resources are stretched. New ways of delivering beach management that seek to improve the visitor experience rather than struggling to hold back a rising tide of problems must be found.

## Future Management Options: Beach Management Improvement Actions

1.15 Some of the issues referred to above are currently being addressed, but some are still a point of contention and concern. **Consultation with the businesses around the beaches showed a strong feeling that the main priority for improving the beaches was to tackle the obvious problems first such as beach cleaning, building redecoration and repair, and action on enforcement.** Suggested short term actions are:

**1.16 Public Toilets and Permanent Buildings in Thanet District Council Ownership:** a number of the Council owned and managed buildings at the beaches are in poor exterior condition presenting an appearance of neglect and decline. A programme of undertaking minor repairs and painting these buildings would go some way to improving the overall appearance of the beaches.

**1.17 Beach Cleansing:** The District Council spends over £350,000 a year cleaning the beaches. It is a major job, and vital to the beaches appeal. Greater understanding and co-operation between the Council and the businesses operating on the beaches would help to reduce the level of complaints. To aid this, the Council should:

- Publish and distribute the planned summer season cleansing schedule
- Hold discussions with beach businesses at the busiest beaches about how best to manage litter collection
- Discuss with businesses better ways of managing the control of litter generated by them

**1.18 Repair and Refurbishment of Concession Kiosks:** Some of the kiosks leased to concessionaires and the containers used by the businesses for storage create a poor impression and are in need to repainting and minor repair. As the work would be of benefit to the concession holder in improving the appearance of their business premises, and as a step towards developing a stronger partnership approach between the Council and concession businesses in the management and quality of the beaches, it would be appropriate to establish a grant scheme for small improvements that matched Council funding with similar investment from the businesses to fund repair and refurbishment.

**1.19 Leases and Licences:** Work is underway within the Estates Department to untangle and where possible rationalise the complex layers of leases and licences that make up the concessions to businesses. One of the aims should be to establish in new leases exactly what the responsibilities of the respective parties are in terms of:

- maintaining and refurbishing buildings and structures
- providing a good customer service and managing the impact of a business on the beach in terms of visual amenity, beach user conflict, litter and waste management

**1.20 Enforcement:** Work is already underway with Kent Police and other agencies under the Community Safety Partnership to reduce anti-social behaviour on the beaches and is recognised as an emerging issue in the 2014-15 Community Safety Plan. A number of initiatives are being trialled as part of this and the Beach Management Plan will help to give extra emphasis.

Building on these actions should include:

- Publicising and circulating to beach businesses the agreed improvements to dealing with enforcement along with key contact numbers to encourage reporting of anti-social behaviour.
- Looking at best practice at other UK resorts and adopting elements of their management where appropriate. The example of Bournemouth's approach to enforcement is set out below.

**1.21 Showers:** All the open air showers on the beaches are in need of renewal. The replacement of the current pipe-work for something more modern and the repair and refurbishment of the concrete bases on which they stand would do much to improve their look.

**1.22 Bay Inspectors:** the role of the Bay Inspector is potentially a very important one. In the short term it would be useful to review, with Your Leisure, what the service specification for the post currently is and where it might be strengthened to make the Inspectors more empowered to influence the overall management and operation of the beaches.

### **Future Management Options: Beach Development**

1.23 Short term actions are important to address immediate concerns, but there are some issues that require a longer term approach. Larger development options have been identified at four beaches where significant work in order to improve their appearance and upgrade the visitor offer to a higher standard is compatible with the Council's pursuit of economic development and urban renewal, and the local community's ambitions for improvement and regeneration at their local beach.

1.24 There are two beaches where the need for redevelopment is pressing – St Mildred's and Westbrook. There is one beach where concerted partnership action is needed to formulate a future for the beach – Viking. And one beach where the options for a beach based activities club could be effectively implemented – Ramsgate Main Sands.

**1.25 St Mildred's Bay:** The Plan outlines a regeneration strategy for the terrace area at St Mildred's that contains the closed and derelict Beach Café, the public toilets and 23 permanent beach huts. As a first step it is recommended that a Feasibility Brief is prepared that paves the way for redevelopment of the whole site and its future management by a single leaseholder.

**1.26 Westbrook Bay:** The Westbrook Loggia which should be the centre- piece and service hub for the Bay is in a poor state of repair with a mixture of tenants and little appeal to the visitor. The Plan identifies the need for a Feasibility Brief to be carried out to map out a new future for the Loggia as a centre for beach and visitor activity and to explore new management options for the building and associated services.

**1.27 Viking Bay:** The most popular Bay in the district is let down by the poor condition of the structures at the back of the beach. The three tier terrace housing permanent beach huts and the old cliff railway buildings are in need of refurbishment and renewal. The Plan recommends that all organisations with an interest in the future development and management of Viking Bay join forces to create a Masterplan for the Bay that looks at the renovation and provision of complementary new facilities for the terrace and cliff railway and new and a robust management structure that allows a more joined up delivery of beach services to visitors.

**1.28 Ramsgate Main Sands:** The Plan picks-up on the concept of Beach Clubs that are common on Belgian beaches where they provide activities and facilities for both local residents and visitors. The Plan recommends that the District and Town Councils, along with other interested organisations, work together on the production of a feasibility study to look at the best location, management model, and potential funding to establish a Beach Club for residents and visitors, particularly aimed at the provision of activities for the teenage and young adult age groups.

### **Future Management Options: Beach Accommodation**

1.29 The Destination Management Plan for Thanet identified the potential for small scale self-catering accommodation on Thanet's beaches to offer a new style of visitor accommodation that would appeal to new markets.

1.30 We have reviewed all of Thanet's beaches and their potential for accommodation under three contexts: **the Policy Context; the Community Context; and the Market Context.**

1.31 The Plan identifies three models for beach accommodation – Promenade based units; Beach based units; and Beach "Pods" in refurbished buildings. The recommendation is that the developments at St Mildred's Bay, Westbrook Bay and Ramsgate Beach Club should, where viable, include accommodation options, and that Council explores further the possibility of units at other beaches.

### **Future Management Options: Beach Management**

1.32 The idea behind looking at different ways of managing beaches in Thanet is to improve the visitor offer by putting the services and facilities at a beach under one management regime responsible for that beach alone; to pass the direct responsibility for a number of operational tasks at a beach from the Council to a designated beach management company; and to allow

that company to develop the beach and its facilities along the lines they feel is the most appropriate to improving the visitor offer.

1.33 The Plan looks at three potential management models for this type of approach to beach management:

- ▶ Community Model: where a local community group forms a company to manage their local beach in partnership with the District Council
- ▶ Co-operative Model: where businesses based at a beach combine in one company to take on the management of their beach
- ▶ Private Sector Model: where responsibility for beach management is let on a tender to a private sector company

1.34 In all cases full public access would be retained and service level agreements between the management company and the Council would ensure the provision of visitor services and quality standards. In order to put any one of the above approaches in place a full and transparent process would be required. The Plan recommends that in order to explore the opportunities further the Council seek expressions of interested parties to run a pilot management project at one of Thanet's beaches to test the concept.

## Recommendations

Within the Plan there are a number of recommendations for action . In summary they are:

1. Undertake a full audit of all Council costs in managing beaches to establish clarity over the exact cost.
2. Carry out a programme of minor repair and re-painting of Council buildings at beaches
3. Publicise the cleansing schedule and discuss litter management with beach businesses
4. Set up a small grant scheme to help concessionaires refurbish their facilities
5. Establish a system of internal consultation on renewal of concession leases and licences
6. Continue discussion with Police over enforcement and publicise agreed actions
7. Look at best practice on enforcement at other resorts and adopt successful measures
8. Renew outdoor shower units at beaches
9. Review the role of Bay Inspectors with a view to giving them a greater role in beach management
10. Commission a Feasibility Brief for St Mildred's Bay and discuss ideas with local residents
11. Commission a Feasibility Brief for Westbrook Bay and discuss ideas with local residents
12. Establish a Steering Group including all interested parties to draw up a Masterplan for the future of Viking Bay
13. Open discussions with Ramsgate Town Council and other interested groups with a view to establishing a Beach Club at Ramsgate Main Sands
14. Include accommodation in development options at Westbrook, St Mildred's and Ramsgate and explore other options further
15. Seek expressions of interest for a pilot beach management scheme
16. Identify an individual officer within the Council who will have responsibility to hold, distribute, and regularly update the Beach Audit sheets



## 2. Background

2.1 In November 2013 Thanet District Council commissioned consultants Acorn Tourism, Real Places and Allen Scott to produce a Beach Management Plan. The creation of the Plan is a key recommendation of the Thanet Destination Management Plan (DMP), adopted by the Council in the summer of 2013 as a key part of the District's economic development plans to support the regeneration of the area's economy through the attraction of new visitor markets and retention of existing markets.

2.2 The DMP identified the beaches as the primary asset that the District has in its visitor offer. They are *"overwhelmingly what motivate people to visit. Their development, management and presentation should be excellent in every way"* Thanet Destination Management Plan 2013. The Plan identified 3 areas which the Council needed to prioritise:

- ▶ *Measures to improve and focus the day-to-day management of the beaches and the effective deployment of resources along the Thanet coastline, taking a beach-by-beach approach.*
- ▶ *Actions that encourage the development of new activities along the coast and introduce new management models for appropriate beaches*
- ▶ *Encourage the development of beach-based units to provide new accommodation opportunities.*

2.3 In order to deliver these priorities, 3 principal actions were considered necessary:

1. *Develop a Beach Management Plan*
2. *Establish a Beach Business Group*
3. *Develop opportunities for community and industry-managed beaches*

This Plan is the completion of the first of those actions. It was funded by a European Union Interreg grant and Thanet District Council.

### Consultation

2.4 In the course of preparing reports we have sought to consult with a number of agencies and organisations involved in beach management and the future of their communities. We have discussed development and management options in workshops with:

- ▶ Thanet District Council Officers involved in beach management
- ▶ The Beach Project group
- ▶ Invitees from the wider tourism and local community

We have also held one-to-one consultations with representatives from Broadstairs and St Peters Town Council, Ramsgate Town Council, the St Mildred’s Bay Association, Westgate and Westbrook Residents Association, and Minnis Baywatch.

### 3. Beach Management Plan Purpose and Content

3.1 The Beach Management Plan covers 17 beaches. It provides, through detailed audits, a compendium of information about the services, facilities and condition of each beach; their environmental, planning, coastal defence and water quality status; and the management issues affecting the beach. This includes a broad assessment of the costs and income generated from the running of the beaches. This data is presented in the form of Audit Sheets for each beach which are included as part of this Plan.

<u>Beaches Included in Beach Management Plan</u>		
Minnis Bay	West Bay	St Mildred’s Bay
Westbrook Bay	Margate Main Sands	Walpole Bay
Palm Bay	Botany Bay	Kingsgate Bay
Joss Bay	Stone Bay	Viking Bay
Louisa Bay	Dumpton Gap	Ramsgate Main Sands
Western Undercliff	Pegwell Bay	

3.2 Collecting the information on individual beaches in one place for the first time allows a measured assessment of the costs and resources that the Council puts into each beach, and the level of income that the beach generates. It also identifies which beaches suffer from specific management problems and the actions that could be taken to rectify some of those problems.

Used and developed in the future as a management tool this data will make it easier to:

- ▶ highlight issues where delivery is not effective
- ▶ co-ordinate and prioritise beach management actions
- ▶ identify areas where new management approaches could save the Council money

<u>Cost / Income Figures Included in Audits</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Concession income at each beach</li> <li>● Car Parking Income</li> <li>● Events Income</li> <li>● Annual cleansing costs</li> <li>● Toilet provision and maintenance</li> <li>● Thanet District Council Management Costs</li> </ul>

- ▶ identify potential locations for new development opportunities on the beaches

3.3 To address all three of the priorities for beaches set out in the DMP we have broken down the analysis of the current beach management system and overall visitor environment presented by the beaches into four Sections covered in the Plan:

- ▶ **Beach Management Improvement Actions:** Section 6 identifies short and medium term actions that could be taken to help resolve some of the common problems and issues raised around the management of the beaches.
- ▶ **Beach Development Options:** Section 7 looks at beaches where the current provision and/or infrastructure are a potential deterrent to attracting new visitors and where new development would significantly upgrade the visitor offer.
- ▶ **Beach Accommodation:** Section 8 considers the sites best suited to the provision of small-scale accommodation opportunities.
- ▶ **Beach Management Options:** In Section 9 we have looked at different management models that could be applied to individual beaches with the objective of moving the day-to-day management of the site away from the existing centralised delivery model towards locally managed solutions. We have drawn up a number of scenarios for how new types of beach management might be structured and deployed.

## 4. Thanet's Beaches: Policy Context

4.1 The beaches are an integral part of what makes up the wider urban and rural landscape, and the overall visitor offer. They are distinct environments in their own right and have a role to play in a number of policy aspects.

### The District Council's Corporate Plan 2012 – 2016

4.2 The Corporate Plan has a range of objectives many of which are directly, or indirectly, dependent on the effective management of the beaches, the development of new services and facilities, and the retention of their appeal and quality. These are set out below alongside the Priority in the Corporate Plan they relate to.

**Priority 1 – We will support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work:**

This priority includes a focus on encouraging and influencing the growth of Thanet's tourism and leisure sectors. As the DMP identified, the attraction and quality of the beaches are a key part of the aim to increase visitor numbers and attract new markets.

**Priority 3 – We will support our community and voluntary organisations:** This priority includes a focus on promoting opportunities for community groups, voluntary sector, parish councils, and the private sector to support existing council services, and help them to build capacity to do so. The potential to devolve the management of some beaches to these groups creates an opportunity to deliver a beach component to this objective.

**Priority 6 – We will make our district cleaner and greener and lead by example on environmental issues:** The maintenance and protection of the environmental designations and seawater quality that apply to Thanet's beaches are a core component in delivering the priority focus of working with partners to identify and improve local bio-diversity and habitats; safeguard the internationally important coastal bird and marine wildlife; and maintain high seawater quality levels and manage seaweed. The beach cleansing work is a vital element in making Thanet a cleaner place to live and presenting an attractive public face.

**Priority 8 – We will support excellent and diverse cultural facilities and activities for our residents and visitors:** Beaches are an essential ingredient of the priority to promote the district as a great destination to live, work and enjoy. They are also central to the aim to build on Thanet's growing reputation to attract higher spending visitors, and the development, promotion and management of the district's magnificent coast.

**Priority 9 – We will support a broad range of sports, leisure, and coastal facilities and activities:** This priority has a focus on maintaining the coastal infrastructure and encouraging new business offering leisure opportunities to establish themselves to widen the use of the

coast, and on working with tourism partners to attract funding for improving seafront facilities to encourage wider use of the coast.

## **Public Access**

4.3 Thanet's beaches have always been open to the public with free access to the promenade, the sand and the sea. This is the cornerstone of the English seaside holiday, unfettered access for all, unlike some overseas coastlines where large areas of land are in private ownership, or large sections of the beach are owned and managed by private concerns – often hotels or holiday parks.

4.4 It is a given that any development proposals or new management models for Thanet's beaches will allow continued free public access to the promenade, the beach and the sea. It may be that some areas of beach, or specific beaches could, as they are at present, be designated by the Council as an area for a specific activity i.e. jet-skiing at Palm Bay, but this would not preclude public access or allow private sector control of who can and can't use the beach.

## **Environmental Quality**

4.5 The Thanet coastline has a number of important environmental designations. It is internationally important as part of the Thanet Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for its chalk reefs, caves and cliffs; and the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for the wintering turnstone (coastal birds) which have high tide roost sites in the area. The Thanet Coast Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is a national designation that covers some features of the intertidal and sub-littoral zone. Together, these designations form the NE Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKMPA).

4.6 The shore (above low tide) is also part of the 'Thanet Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI) – which covers biological features such as the reef and sand communities, coastal birds (e.g. Sanderling) and geological features of the chalk cliffs. Sandwich and Pegwell Bay are a National Nature Reserve designated for its chalk cliffs, mud flats, saltmarsh and sand dunes.

4.7 Water quality around Thanet is generally very good with 9 beaches where water quality recordings are taken by the Environment Agency registering consistently high standards. The beaches where there are some concerns are at Viking Bay and Margate Main Sands where minimum standards have been recorded recently and at Walpole Bay where the water failed the Environment Agency test. Seven beaches have a Blue Flag Award and three, Margate Main Sands, Viking Bay and Ramsgate Main Sands, have Seaside Awards.

## **Planning Policy**

4.8 A new Local Plan is currently being prepared. Existing policy for beaches is based on the 2006 Local Plan Saved Policies which identified beaches as either:

- ▶ **Major Holiday Beaches** – where the Council will support proposals for provision and upgrading of a wide range of facilities and services, subject to nature conservation designations.
- ▶ **Intermediate Holiday Beaches** – where appropriate, small scale development of a limited range of basic facilities (beach huts, kiosks, beach furniture etc) will be permitted subject to appropriate design.
- ▶ **Undeveloped Beaches** - subject to planning controls that maintain and enhance their natural character. New development of facilities and infrastructure would not be permitted.

4.9 The strong European environmental designations mean that any development on beaches should demonstrate that there is no likely significant effect on the sites in line with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

## Coastal Defence

4.10 The long term aim as stated in the Shoreline Development Plan – Isle of Grain to South Foreland (2008) around all of the built-up areas of the coast is to **hold the line** continuing to maintain defences and assets where there is an economic justification. It is envisaged that this will be achieved through maintaining / upgrading the existing toe defences (this arrests erosion at the cliff toe but not at the cliff top, although the rate of erosion is reduced). Where there currently are no defences in place in the more rural parts of the coast a policy of **no active intervention** is currently followed, which allows natural processes to take place i.e. erosion of the chalk cliffs and the fronting rock platform.

## Byelaws and Voluntary Codes

4.11 All of Thanet’s beaches are covered by a range of byelaws designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and reduce conflicts between different users of the beaches. The local council is able to make and enforce byelaws (subject to confirmation from the relevant Government Department). The existing byelaws cover

- Use of vehicles
- Horse riding
- Begging and touting
- Booths and tents
- Preaching, lectures, music and entertainment
- Cycling on promenade
- Bonfires & barbecues
- Ball games
- Dogs on beaches

4.12 The beaches are also covered by a series of voluntary codes, the Thanet Coastal Codes, which reinforce the byelaws and advise on the conduct of other activities that fall outside the byelaws. The codes cover:

- Seashore Code
- Bait digging & collecting
- Dog Walking

- Horse Riding
- Field Trips
- Shellfish Harvesting & Fixed Netting
- Marine Wildlife Watching
- Shore Angling
- Powercraft Activities
- Wind-Powered Activities

## 5. Current Beach Management

5. Thanet District Council is distinct in the number of beaches it has to manage, the overall length of coastline under its direct control, and consequently, the number and range of issues it has to deal with. The District has a substantial area of urban coastline – 3 main towns and a number of smaller, but distinct, suburban village communities. A large number of beaches adjoin these areas and suffer many of the problems and issues that arise from beaches being adjacent to large and diverse urban populations. Typically a district with a resort town and urban coastline will have to deal with a much smaller number of main beaches backed by built-up areas. If they have other beaches to manage they are often in outlying rural areas.

5.2 The Council is overwhelmingly the main provider of management services for the beaches. These include cleansing and litter collection, public toilets, seaweed removal, beach raking, sand bunding and levelling, infrastructure and buildings repair and maintenance, shelters and seats, signs, tidal pools, slipways, beach awards, and bylaw creation and enforcement. They employ a full time Foreshore Officer and Foreshore Inspector whose resources are stretched to cover all the beaches.

5.3 The rental of the permanent beach huts, the rental and maintenance of the temporary huts, and the rental of plots to private hut owners is managed by Your Leisure on contract to the Council. Your Leisure also employ within the same contract, Bay Inspectors to manage the beach huts on site at the beaches where there are concentrations of huts.

5. The seasonal lifeguard service is delivered by the RNLI on contract to the Council. A basic level of first aid is supplied via the contract.

5.5 The food and drink, retail, activity, and equipment rental services that are provided on the beaches are delivered either through concessions let by the Council, or, in a small number of cases, by privately owned premises on the beach. The length of time that Thanet's beaches have been an attraction to visitors has also meant that over the years a large number of concessions have been developed and let by the Council on differing terms, lease lengths and tenancy status and need considerable ongoing management.

5.6 This level of service delivery across such a large number of beaches puts a heavy burden on the Council's resources which are stretched to deliver the best service. The problems are compounded by the existence of a large amount of old, crumbling infrastructure; buildings that were built in the area's tourism heyday and are suffering from age and the tough seaside environment. Many of the buildings are in need of major refurbishment or replacement.

## Council Funding for Beaches

5.7 The funding to deliver this wide range of services associated with managing the beaches is spread across a number of different budget heads – cleansing, foreshore management, toilets, seaweed removal, core staff costs etc. In a number of cases additional funds are required, above those budgeted, to tackle unforeseen problems caused by extreme weather conditions, problems created by one-off events, or in response to pressing public demand for additional services over and above those scheduled e.g. increasing the operational time of the beach lift at Broadstairs in response to complaints, increasing night time security patrols, and providing Bay Inspector cover for Ramsgate at peak season weekends.

5.8 Money to cover these exceptional costs is often moved from one budget to another. Officers are managing a demand for beach services that outstrips the budget provided. Whilst flexibility in budget management is an integral part of any Council's business the work done as part of this Plan to establish what the actual costs associated with managing each beach really are has shown that the real costs of looking after Thanet's beaches differ from those budgeted.

5.9 Unpicking the actual costs from the variety of different funding streams, the complex web of payments and the difference between budgeted, forecast and outturn costs requires a comprehensive examination of all the actual cost and income streams associated with beach management, across the whole Council. Any impact on the Your Leisure Beach Hut income needs to be considered in the wider Your Leisure subsidy and delivery across the district.

5.10 There may be some merit in creating a single Beach Management budget head to clearly identify and budget for all beach management costs. If this is not considered practical then as an aid to understanding the true costs an exercise should be undertaken annually to draw together all the costs and incomes, and those figures should be published to show the significant extent to which the Council invests in its beaches.

5.11 Information gathered in developing the Plan allows a broad figure for the total cost of beach management to be set at £972,000 p.a. This is by no means an exact figure as a forensic examination of all budgets across the Council has not been carried out. It does not include for instance maintenance costs for Council buildings and infrastructure, legal and estates management, seaweed collection. This figure also does not take into account any subsidies, particularly those linked with the operation of the beach hut service.

5.12 These costs are offset by estimated income of £164,575 for concessions, £62,800 from car parks serving specific beaches, and income from events and film/photo shoots. The rental of beach huts and plots also generates an income estimated to be over £480,000 (offset by maintenance and staff costs) which accrues to Your Leisure and cross-subsidises other sport



and leisure services in the area. When considering future plans for the beaches the impact on the subsidy given for leisure services needs to be considered.

## **Management Issues**

5.13 In the course of producing the Beach Management Plan we have consulted with local businesses, and Council Officers and Members to understand what the key issues are. In no particular priority order the main problems and issues facing the management of the beaches are:

### **Litter Collection and Cleansing**

5.14 The number of beaches that need to be litter picked and have the bins emptied presents a significant amount of work for the cleansing teams, a task that is made considerably harder when good weather means that thousands of visitors use Thanet's beaches.

5.15 Currently, work is carried out to a core schedule that sees mobile squads visiting all beaches once a day in the 24 week summer season, with additional litter picking teams working on the most heavily used beaches at Margate Main Sands, Ramsgate Main Sands, Viking Bay and Joss Bay. During the same 24 week period a team empties the litter bins at all the beaches between 1 and 5 times a day depending on need. Special duties are also required periodically when an event on a beach creates a lot of litter.

5.16 Margate Main Sands and Viking Bay are raked every morning in the summer season and Joss Bay, Ramsgate Main Sands, Westbrook Bay and Botany Bay are raked on average 1.5 times a week.

5.17 Despite this schedule there are a number of complaints from businesses operating on or near the beaches that the litter problem at peak times is not dealt with adequately, particularly at Viking Bay. Complaints range from a shortage of bins, the locations they are placed, and the frequency and timing of the litter collection at the heavily used beaches.

5.18 Out of the 24 week season the beaches and promenades are cleaned as part of the normal litter collection service. This does mean that in the shoulder months litter and dog mess can build up and be a problem at certain sites.

5.19 Data collected on the cost of running this service show the scale of the task and the annual revenue and capital costs the Council face to control the problem. It is forecast that the summer service will cost £356,167 a year to run in 2014 including capital charges, agency costs and core costs (staff, vehicles, petrol etc.). However, the budget for the service is £258,253 which creates shortfall between budget and forecast costs of around £100,000.

### **Anti Social Behaviour and Byelaw Enforcement**

5.20 The problems encountered on Thanet's beaches fall into 4 main categories:

- Transgression of existing byelaws – there are 9 sets of by laws covering Horse Riding, Vehicles on Beaches, Cycling, Begging and Touting, Ball Games, Preaching and Entertainment, Booths and Tents, Bonfires and Barbeques, and Dogs on Beaches. The main problems are around owners walking their dogs in proscribed times and attendant dog fouling, illegal beach parties and barbeques, and cycling on restricted areas on the promenades.
- Vandalism and Graffiti – common problem across all the beaches, but most prevalent in the main towns and at locations that are remote from the general public on the lower promenade.
- Break-ins and Theft – predominately in beach huts (Minnis Bay seems to have a particular problem), but other buildings can suffer.
- Anti-social gatherings – groups of young people congregate on beaches to drink in the evenings creating disturbance and litter, street drinking around the Ramsgate Pavilion is a particular problem.

5.21 Beach Inspectors employed by Your Leisure are on hand to try and make sure by laws are not transgressed but they are not empowered to take formal action. They do have authority to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, littering and cycling, but none were issued in 2013.

### **Public Toilets**

5.22 In common with most local authorities a large number of complaints from businesses, residents and visitors is about the quality of the public toilets. There are 18 sets of public toilets serving beaches in Thanet, 7 of which are open all year, the others for the summer season only. The annual cost to the Council is £153,960 to cover cleansing, water and electricity.

5.23 The toilets range from stand-alone buildings that are some years old – e.g. Stone, Joss, Dumpton, and St Mildred's beaches, to more modern facilities – e.g. Margate Clock Tower, Minnis Bay, and those that are part of a larger building or structure – e.g. Westbrook, Viking Bay. The complaints focus around the general condition, both interior and exterior, cleansing, and the need for additional provision at peak times or at places not served by toilets.

### **Concession Leases and Licences**

5.24 Over the years a large number of concessions and licences have been granted to a wide range of individuals and groups to run services or use buildings on the beaches. This has created a complex set of contracts and leases all running at different time scales, with varying annual fees and tenancy conditions and little quality control all of which puts a burden on Council officers managing the service.

5.25 In a number of cases while the tenant has the right to run the service, it is the Council that has retained the responsibility for maintenance and repair of the structures, which generates a heavy financial burden.

### **Council Owned Buildings and Kiosks**

5.26 The Council owns a large number of buildings, kiosks and structures on the beaches. As mentioned above, many of them are let to tenants but the Council has the maintenance responsibility. The number of buildings that need looking after coupled with the sometimes extreme weather conditions experienced on the coast means that the Council does not have the financial resources to maintain them all in top condition. Some of the bigger structures – the Terrace and Cliff Railway at Viking Bay, the cliff wall and toilets at Westbrook, the Loggia at Westbrook, and some sets of permanent beach huts – are in need to repair and refurbishment, but a lack of resources means that they are unable to be brought up to standard and continue their slow decline.

### **Showers**

5.27 Open air showers are provided at the main beaches. In all cases they are unattractive, functional, and in need of updating.

### **Privately Owned Buildings and Structures**

5.28 There are a number of examples of buildings that are in private ownership, or long term lease that are being left to decay by their owners creating very unattractive settings. The worst examples are the Lido at Margate, the café at St Mildred's and the Pavilion at Ramsgate.

### **Beach Huts**

5.29 There is clearly a very strong demand for beach huts in addition to the considerable number that already exist. However there are some concerns about the current state of the permanent structures most of which are in need of refurbishment, the costs of maintaining the temporary huts rented out by Your Leisure, and on some beaches, the proliferation of huts to the detriment of the visual amenity. On the plus side, the beach huts do provide considerable income to Your Leisure (estimated at c. £480,000 p.a. as cross subsidy for other services) and, if well used provide a public presence to deter anti-social behaviour and a sense of ownership of the beach amongst users.

### **Bay Inspectors**

5.30 There are 5 beaches that have a Bay Inspector in situ during the summer season – Minnis, West/St Mildred's (one inspector covers both), Westbrook, Margate Main Sands, and Viking. In 2014 there will an extra Inspector covering Stone and West bays at weekends. In addition for 2014 the Council is funding an Inspector to cover Ramsgate Main Sands at peak season

weekends. A Foreshore Supervisor is employed by Your Leisure part-time to manage the service.

5.31 The Bay Inspectors play a vital role as the public face of the authority on hand at the beach to deal with enquiries, listen to complaints, and pass information back to the Council. There is a Service Specification for the Bay Inspectors that should be reviewed to meet the needs of the beach users including its businesses and visitors.

### **Seaweed**

5.32 The build-up of the large volume of seaweed that washes up on Thanet's beaches can create a foul smell and its management and clearance is a point of contention with some residents, businesses and visitors.

### **Car Parking**

5.33 Concerns about car parking at some beaches fall into three categories:

- Lack of provision at popular beaches where, at times of high use, cars are parked on residential streets e.g. Botany Bay, Minnis Bay
- The cost of car parking at some beaches, notably Joss Bay where the charges are £8 per day, displacing parking to the small roads around the Bay, and in Broadstairs where the car parking costs in the town car parks are expensive for visitors to the beach who want to stay there all day.
- At some town car parks, particularly Broadstairs and Ramsgate, the pay and display ticketing system can work against visitors wanting to spend all day on the beach because the car park has a limit on the time a car can be parked e.g. 4 hours.

### **Tidal Pools**

5.34 The Council is responsible for the maintenance of six tidal pools at Minnis Bay, St Mildred's Bay, Margate Main Sands, Walpole Bay, Viking Bay, and Ramsgate Western Undercliff. They are all very functional structures, open to the elements and suffering from algae growth and seaweed incursion with no associated beach furniture, rails, sunbathing areas etc. that can be found at other tidal pools in resorts in the UK and abroad. They do not present a particularly attractive option for bathers and only one, Walpole, is suitable for swimming.

### **Cliff Lifts**

5.35 There are four lifts from the beach to the cliff top owned and maintained by the Council. Two of them, at Broadstairs and Ramsgate Main Sands, are operational and require regular attention. The other two (at Walpole Bay and the Western cliff at Ramsgate) are non-operational and attract vandalism, graffiti and a number of complaints about their lack of

service. Even though they are not in use the non-operational lifts require maintenance incurring a cost to the Council for keeping structures that are of no public service.

## 6. Beach Management: Improvement Actions

6.1 Some of the issues referred to above are currently being addressed, but some are still a point of contention and concern. **Consultation with the businesses around the beaches showed a strong feeling that the main priority for improving the beaches was to tackle the obvious problems first such as beach cleaning, building redecoration and repair, and action on enforcement.** There are opportunities for taking action to set right problems identified in the audit process and through consultation.

### Public Toilets and Permanent Buildings in Thanet District Council Ownership

6.2 A number of the Council owned and managed buildings at the beaches are in poor exterior condition presenting an appearance of neglect and decline. A programme of undertaking minor repairs and painting these buildings would go some way to improving the overall appearance of the beaches.

#### **Council buildings in need of minor repair/repainting taken from Audit action points**

Minnis Bay – Bay Inspectors hut, Permanent beach huts  
 West Bay – Toilet exterior, Permanent beach huts  
 Westbrook Bay – Remove signs from closed toilet block, Permanent beach huts, Loggia toilet interior, Clean up used areas on promenade  
 Margate Main Sands – Bay Inspectors hut, Nayland Shelter  
 Walpole Bay – Signing on un-operational lift  
 Botany Bay – Toilet exterior  
 Joss Bay – Toilets  
 Stone Bay – Bay Inspectors hut, Permanent beach huts  
 Louisa Bay – Permanent beach huts  
 Ramsgate Main Sands – Signing on non-operational lift

### Beach Cleansing

6.3 There is no doubt that the work done to clean the beaches is essential to maintaining their attraction to visitors. The cleansing schedule planned for 2014 is extensive. But, at peak times on the popular beaches the sheer volume of visitors overpowers the service and problems occur – problems that are quickly picked up by visitors and businesses alike. There are some simple actions that could help to improve understanding of the problems facing the Council, and engage the businesses in thinking about managing litter.

- Publish and distribute the planned summer season cleansing schedule so that businesses understand the level of service being provided.

- Hold discussions with beach businesses at the busiest beaches (Viking, Margate, Joss) about how best to manage litter collection, and the optimum number, design, and location of litter bins.
- Discuss ways of better managing the control of litter from those businesses that generate litter through the use of disposable packaging or glasses including seeking a more proactive response from those businesses to educate their customers to properly dispose of litter, provide bins on their own premises, and be more active in collecting the waste generated by their business.

## Repair and Refurbishment of Concession Kiosks

6.4 As with public toilets and the Council owned permanent buildings, some of the kiosks leased to concessionaires and the containers used by the businesses for storage create a poor impression and are in need to repainting and minor repair.

### **Concession structures in need of minor repair/repainting taken from Audit action points**

Minnis Bay – Bay Inspectors hut, Permanent beach huts  
 West Bay – Ice cream kiosk  
 Margate Main Sands – Deck chair kiosks  
 Palm Bay – Containers  
 Botany Bay – Containers  
 Joss Bay – Containers, Café exterior  
 Viking Bay – Bucket and spade concession frontage  
 Louisa Bay – Café  
 Dumpton Gap – Café

6.5 As the work would be of benefit to the concession holder in improving the appearance of their business premises, and as a step towards developing a stronger partnership approach between the Council and concession businesses in the management and quality of the beaches it would be appropriate to establish a small improvement grant scheme that matched Council funding with similar investment from the businesses to fund repair and refurbishment.

6.6 The scheme should be designed to provide a simple application process for interested businesses, quick decision making and a payment schedule that does not affect the businesses cash flow. Grants are likely to be small but a ceiling can be put on the allowed amount to be bid for. There are a number of important decisions to be made about the scale and design of a grant scheme, the process of acquiring quotes, whether or not work done by concession holders themselves is eligible, the grant approval system etc. A check list below identifies the main issues that need to be addressed to ensure the correct use of public money.

6.7 If there are capacity problems within the Council to design and manage a small grant scheme then it should be outsourced for quick design and delivery although it would be

important to ensure that there was a strong Council involvement in any decision making process.

#### **Guidelines on potential small grant scheme**

- ▶ Clearly establish who is eligible for the grant (Council concession holders on named beaches, freehold owners of beach businesses)
- ▶ Clearly identify what work is eligible for grant (painting, minor repair, re-roofing etc)
- ▶ Set a figure for the maximum and minimum grant available
- ▶ Identify a clear Council grant intervention rate e.g. 50% of total scheme costs
- ▶ Design a simple grant request form for businesses to complete and submit
- ▶ Agree a structure for approving grant applications
- ▶ Agree how many quotes need to be acquired, and whether the lowest quote will be deemed the one on which grant is made
- ▶ Decide if the cost of concessionaires doing their own work is eligible – and if so is their time included as an eligible cost
- ▶ Agree payment profile e.g. 50% at start, 50% on completion
- ▶ Clearly state what evidence is needed of payment to contractor being made
- ▶ Agree a process of checking the work is done to specification and signing off grant

### **Leases and Licences**

6.8 Work is underway within the Estates Department to untangle and where possible rationalise the complex layers of leases and licences that make up the concessions to businesses. One of the aims should be to establish in new leases exactly what the responsibilities of the respective parties are in terms of:

- maintaining and refurbishing buildings and structures
- providing a good customer service and managing the impact of a business on the beach in terms of visual amenity, beach user conflict, litter and waste management

6.9 As leases and licences come up for renewal discussion should take place with economic development and beach service delivery teams to ensure that the renewal of a lease or licence will not disrupt any long term development plans for the beach and its buildings, will not cause any adverse impacts – and if they do what conditions should be put in the lease to reduce or remove those impacts.

### **Enforcement – below TBC**

6.10 Work is already underway with Kent Police and other agencies under the Community Safety Partnership to reduce anti-social behaviour on the beaches and is recognised as an emerging issue in the 2014-15 Community Safety Plan. A number of initiatives are being trialled as part of this and the Beach Management Plan will help to give extra emphasis.

Building on these actions should include:



- Publicising and circulating to beach businesses the agreed improvements to dealing with enforcement along with key contact numbers to encourage reporting of anti-social behaviour.
- Looking at best practice at other UK resorts and adopting elements of their management where appropriate. The example of Bournemouth's approach to enforcement is set out below.

### **The Bournemouth Example**

Bournemouth Council have worked closely with the Police, local schools, and youth and community groups in a joined-up approach to reduce anti-social behaviour on their beaches and to improve compliance with byelaws. The starting point was that prevention is better than cure and they have sought to engage the local community in the issues:

**Dogs on beaches and dog fouling** – the Council consult regularly with residents and stakeholders to get their views on the byelaw restrictions in place and on what is and isn't working. They work with the Dogs Trust to get information across to dog owners and organise charity walks for local dog owners. This does not directly address the irresponsible dog owner who is unlikely to be part of these groups, but it does inform and energise responsible dog owners to pass the message on to anyone they encounter transgressing the byelaws.

**Litter** – the emphasis here is on working with community groups and local schools to educate them about not dropping litter. The Council organises volunteer litter picks with local schools, scout and guide groups, and other youth organisations. Litter teams give out bin bags to beach users when on patrol to encourage them to clear up after their stay.

The beach management team work with the Council's youth services to engage local youngsters in discussion about issues at their beaches and the problems that can be caused.

The Council publishes its byelaws every year when they come into force and work with the Police on the beaches in the first 2/3 weeks of implementation to inform people transgressing the laws what they have done and to deter them from repeating the breach. Penalty notices are not often issued at this stage as the exercise is aimed at educating the public.

During the summer season the Council employs a team of Beach Rangers to patrol the promenades and operate six beach offices. They are there primarily to offer helpful, friendly advice but are trained and empowered to issue penalty notices. They and the Lifeguards have radios that provide communication with the central office and have a 999 link if needed. The central office has a direct communication with the local police station and can pass on any calls for police assistance if the problem is not an emergency, but needs law enforcement.

## Showers

6.11 All the open air showers on the beaches are in need of renewal. At present they offer an uninviting appearance of neglect. There is no suggestion that the basic provision of open air showers on the beaches should be significantly upgraded, but the replacement of the current pipe-work for something more modern and the repair and refurbishment of the concrete bases on which they stand would do much to improve their look. The images below show how better designed showers can improve the appearance.



Examples of modern shower design



## Bay Inspectors:

6.12 The role of the Bay Inspector is potentially a very important one. The presence of an authorised individual who is defined as the ‘territory manager’ of the beach can be of enormous value in ensuring that byelaws are adhered to, litter is collected and bins emptied when needed, concessionaires are happy and in the loop, problems with structures and facilities are reported, and toilets are cleaned adequately.

6.13 In the short term it would be useful to review, with Your Leisure, what the service specification for the post currently is and where it might be strengthened to make the Inspectors more empowered to influence the overall management and operation of the beaches.

## 7. Beach Development Options

7.1 Longer term development options have been identified at four beaches where significant development in order to improve their appearance and upgrade the visitor offer to a higher standard is compatible with the Council's pursuit of economic development and urban renewal, and the local community's ambitions for improvement and regeneration at their local beach.

7.2 There are two beaches where the need for redevelopment is pressing – St Mildred's and Westbrook. There is one beach where concerted partnership action is needed to formulate a future for the beach – Viking. And one beach where the options for a beach based activities club could be effectively implemented – Ramsgate Main Sands.

### St Mildred's Bay

7.3 St Mildred's is an attractive beach in a pleasant residential area badly let down in its appeal by the dereliction of the empty Beach Cafe and the poor quality of the public realm in which it and the permanent beach huts, toilets and open shower sit. There is a second café in private ownership that is well kept, open all year round and popular.

7.4 Currently the Council receives an income of £1,619 in the form of revenue from the car park next to the beach (although this is a figure from 2011 – the machines have not been working in the last two years). The estimated cost of managing the beach p.a. is £50,099 made up from cleansing costs - £10,726; toilet costs - £11,690; and overall management costs - £27,683.

7.5 There is an opportunity to both improve the beach environment, and increase income to the Council through the redevelopment of the current unused Beach Café/toilet block/beach huts area to provide a mix of well-designed small scale self-catering accommodation units and beach huts to be developed and managed by commercial interests willing to invest, and let by the Council under one single long term lease.

7.6 The Bay has a number of advantages as a site for development:

- ▶ Intermediate Beach – small scale development allowed
- ▶ "Hold the line" coastal defence policy
- ▶ Development on promenade above flood risk (a management policy to mitigate risk in extreme conditions would be needed)
- ▶ Good vehicular and disabled access and designated parking
- ▶ Well used beach in built-up area – no sense of remoteness to support sense of security (design and management policy would mitigate against visual intrusion and noise)
- ▶ Safe, compact and well maintained beach – ideal for family use
- ▶ Water quality good, beach inspector, lifeguards in peak season, existing café facilities
- ▶ Good access to cycle routes and walking routes to town centres

► Utilities available at location

7.7 One option for developing the site would be to clear the unused café, toilet block, and old permanent beach huts to open up space for the provision of small scale accommodation units and new removable beach huts to replace the existing permanent huts. New toilet facilities would be provided by the developer as part of the investment costs.

7.8 In order to facilitate the leasing of the site to a commercial investor the Council would need to acquire the Beach Café. The cost of this purchase would be offset over time through the income generated by the lease. The property is understood to be on the market at £35,000.

7.9 To make any investment commercially attractive the lease would need to be granted for a long term – up to 24 years with regular rent review and break points to ensure both parties are happy with the arrangements.

7.10 A Feasibility Brief for the site that looks at the exact number of units and beach huts that could be located there, the cost of levelling the site, the provision of utilities and a detailed business plan should be commissioned to further explore the opportunity and pave the way for the Council to invite expressions of interest.

7.11 It would be essential at an early stage of the Brief, before any firm conclusions are made about the level and type of development possible, to consult with the local residents and to gather their ideas about what form any development may take. There has already been some thinking in the local community about sustainable development initiatives at the Bay which would fit easily within a Feasibility Brief.

The potential timeline for the development of the site would be:

2014

- Commission Feasibility Brief for the redevelopment of the site (Visit Kent funding to support cost of commission)
- Open discussions with current owner of the Beach Café to ascertain what their intentions for the building are and take appropriate steps to acquire the building through purchase if possible.

2015

- Invite expressions of interest on the basis of the Feasibility Brief findings to ascertain the level of commercial interest in the opportunity and the type of developments envisaged.
- Design a lease that accommodates both the Council's interests and long term public ownership of the site with the freedom of choice for a developer to invest in commercially viable facilities.
- Request tenders for development.

2016

- Let lease to preferred tender
- Work starts on site

## Westbrook Bay

7.12 Westbrook Bay is a large sandy beach which is good for swimming. It has a long open promenade let down by the quality of some of the buildings and infrastructure, particularly the Loggia – a fine interwar building with views across to the Turner Contemporary, that is desperately in need of repair and refurbishment and a more coherent purpose than the present one which is part facilities and services for beach visitors, part local community space and part storeroom.

7.13 Currently the Council receives an income of £20,500 in the form of revenue from concessions and rents on the Bay and in the Loggia. The estimated cost of managing the beach p.a. is £55,851 made up from cleansing costs - £19,184; toilet costs - £8,869; and overall management costs - £27,798.

7.14 Its location adjacent to Margate town centre and the Main Sands, the soon to be redeveloped Dreamland site, and the refurbished and improved Sea Bathing Hospital apartments offers the opportunity to look at the positioning of the Bay as a calmer extension of that urban environment, to provide facilities for the new “young urbanite” visitor markets that Margate increasingly is attracting, encouraging them to stay for more than a day visit.

7.15 Central to any improvement of the Bay’s facilities is the Loggia – an iconic building that has fallen into a state of neglect and disparate use. To take the idea of an overall improvement to the Bay forward it is recommended that a Feasibility Brief is commissioned to look at:

- ▶ Full building appraisal and use of the Loggia as a food, retail and mixed use outlet
- ▶ the provision of small self-catering units in the Loggia and/or locations adjacent to the Loggia
- ▶ the development of a motor-home parking site at Barnes car park
- ▶ the potential for a long term lease let for the integrated management of the Loggia, self-catering units and motor-home park.

7.16 The Bay is well suited to development:

- ▶ Intermediate Beach – small scale development allowed
- ▶ “Hold the line” coastal defence policy
- ▶ Development on promenade above flood risk (management policy to mitigate risk in extreme conditions)
- ▶ Good vehicular and disabled access
- ▶ Safe, well maintained beach
- ▶ Water quality good, beach inspector, lifeguards in peak season
- ▶ Good access to cycle routes and close to Margate town centre
- ▶ Need to improve the look and maintenance of the Loggia to avoid it becoming an eyesore and increase its market potential
- ▶ Proposal fits in with overall aims to regenerate and improve Margate sea front
- ▶ Utilities available at location

7.17 As an early part of any work on a Feasibility Brief it will be important to consult with and gather ideas for the Bay from local residents and stakeholders who take a keen interest in its future.

7.18 In order to allow the redevelopment and leasing on a long term let of the Loggia it will be necessary to consider existing tenants, and leases to accommodate them within the Feasibility Brief and renewal of the building. The provision of public toilets should be the responsibility of the new leaseholder.

7.19 The building would be let on long lease to a single tenant prepared to invest in refurbishment and new facilities. Due to the scale of investment required, the term of the lease would need to give the tenant time to generate a return on their investment. The length of the lease may be determined by the scale of investment envisaged by potential tenants, but a guaranteed 24 year lease is likely to be the minimum time required.

The potential timeline for the development of the site would be:

2014

- ▶ Commission Feasibility Brief exploring the potential for the redevelopment of the Loggia, associated small scale accommodation provision, and the creation of a motor-home park at the Barnes car park. (Visit Kent funding to support cost of commission)
- ▶ Open discussions with current tenants with a view to considering options and possible restructuring their leases to accommodate the new development.
- ▶ Consult with local residents to establish their views and ideas

2015

- ▶ Invite expressions of interest on the basis of the Feasibility Brief findings to ascertain the level of commercial interest in the opportunity and the type of facilities envisaged
- ▶ Design a lease that accommodates both the Council's interests and long term public ownership of the site with the freedom of choice for a developer to invest in commercially viable facilities
- ▶ Request tenders for development and let lease to preferred tender
- ▶ Work starts on site.

## Viking Bay

7.20 Viking Bay is the most popular Bay in the district and heavily used in peak periods. It is well served by beach based and surrounding businesses and backed by attractive and well maintained cliff-top gardens and upper promenade and the charming old section of Broadstairs town.

7.21 Its status as Thanet's premier beach is badly undermined by the structures at the back of the beach against the cliff wall. The Terrace housing permanent beach huts, toilets, changing rooms and other services is in a state of poor repair and needs regular attention; the old cliff

railway is a crumbling eyesore, and the stairways down to the beach are in need of painting and minor repair. The proliferation of beach huts in front of the Terrace creates disconnected and unattractive spaces behind and a sense of clutter on the beach. At peak times litter can be a big problem. The small tidal pool is very unwelcoming, covered in algae and seaweed.

7.22 Currently the Council receives an income of £37,750 in the form of revenue from concessions and rents in the Bay and its Harbour Street properties. The estimated cost of managing the beach p.a. is £144,306 made up of cleansing costs - £62,722; toilet costs - £27,742; and overall management costs - £53,842.

7.23 A number of ideas and plans for the refurbishment of all or parts of the Terrace and cliff railway have been mooted in the past and there are plenty of calls for a new approach to rubbish collection, concerns about the management of the public toilets and the lift, and the state of the changing rooms. Many of the current areas of discontent can be dealt with by short term management actions, but any action to bring about an improvement in the beach infrastructure and the overall layout and operation of the Bay requires a larger, better thought out, longer term approach.

7.24 Developing the Terrace and associated structures, and organising the beach so that it truly lives up to its reputation requires all the interested parties (Broadstairs and St. Peters Town Council, Broadstairs Town Team, Chamber of Commerce, the Leisure and Tourism Association, the Civic Society, and Thanet District Council) to work together to produce a Masterplan for the Bay. As well as looking at options for the Terrace the work could extend to include ideas on the way litter collection and waste is managed, the integration of the Harbour Arm into the Bay's overall "brand", the refurbishment of the changing rooms and toilets, and the overall day to day management of the Bay. Local management of this work would ensure that any proposed development was in keeping with the look and feel of Broadstairs sea front and historic town.

7.25 A Masterplan would include estimated costs for refurbishment to bring the Terrace up to an acceptable condition – and indicate what elements of the development mix should fall to private sector investment and management on a long lease, which facilities and services would need to stay in public ownership and control, and where possible funding streams could be found to pay for the work.

### **Ramsgate Main Sands**

7.26 Ramsgate Main Sands is a very large beach extending northward from the Harbour. Overall, beach infrastructure is of good design and in good repair and the beach operates without significant problems. The empty Victorian Pavilion at the south end and the incomplete housing development against the cliffs gives the beach an air of neglect.

7.27 Currently the Council receives an income of £23,750 (excluding Pavilion lease income) in the form of revenue from concessions and rents on the Bay. The estimated cost of managing

the beach p.a. is £98,898 made up of cleansing costs - £53,275; toilet costs - £13,981; and overall management costs - £31,641.

7.28 The proposed development option at Ramsgate is to establish a Beach Club for residents and visitors, particularly aimed at the provision of activities for the teenage and young adult age groups. Beach clubs are common in continental resorts, particularly in Belgium where many successful ventures have been established (see panel below).

### Belgian Beach Clubs

Each Belgian resort along its coast has its own beach club that provide a range of facilities for club members and visitors. They vary from club to club but typically include toilets, showers and changing rooms, storage space for equipment, a cafe and bar, and comfortable seating. They offer a variety of water sports and beach based sporting activities such as kayaking, sailing, kite surfing, surfing, wakeboarding, volleyball, and beach football.

Clubs range in size from 200 – 900 members who mainly live in the area or holiday regularly at that resort. Day visitor members are also able to use the clubs facilities, hire equipment and book coaching.

The site for the club is generally owned by the Council and leased on a long lease, typically 27 years, to the operator. Revenue comes from membership, food and drink sales, coaching, and equipment hire.

The most successful models are based on the operator undertaking the investment in building the club house. In some cases the Council has provided a grant to support the provision of toilets and showers for use by the general public. Other models involve the Council building the facilities and leasing them to an operator.



7.29 Developing a beach club at Ramsgate Main Sands would provide new activities on the beach to be enjoyed by residents and visitors and increase the use of the beach in shoulder months.



7.30 The idea needs to be driven by a partnership venture between Thanet District Council and Ramsgate Town Council to:

- ▶ Identify the best location for the Club. This could be a new build on the beach or the utilisation of all or part of an existing structure
- ▶ Decide the best management model for the success of the venture
- ▶ Produce a feasibility study and a brief for what would be included in a tender process
- ▶ Research possible funds to support development and bid if suitable
- ▶ Promote the concept of the club to potential investors
- ▶ Agree and let a tender for the provision of the facility

## 8. Beach Accommodation

8.1 The Destination Management Plan for Thanet identified the potential for small scale self-catering accommodation on Thanet's beaches to offer a new style of visitor accommodation that would appeal to new markets.

8.2 We have reviewed all of Thanet's beaches and their potential for accommodation under three contexts: **the Policy Context; the Community Context; and the Market Context.**

### The Policy Context

**Planning Designation** – the designation of the beach would need to be “Major Holiday” or “Intermediate” in the saved policies of the 2006 Local Plan.

**Design Principles** – development needs to conform to Policy D1 and respect and enhance the area in terms of design, scale and location, respect existing open space and existing buildings, have good access for all and no harmful impact on the environment.

**Flood Risk and Coastal Defence** – development should be located where there is little risk of flooding except in extreme conditions, and should be designed and managed to mitigate against those conditions. No development should be in a location under medium term threat from coastal erosion.

**Environmental Designation** – no development should cause any adverse environmental impact on the Marine Conservation Area; roosting bird colonies and other wildlife; or seawater quality.

### The Community Context

**Impact on Local Residents** – no development or beach management approach should have an adverse impact on the local residents. Any options should be tested at an early stage on local community groups to ensure they have their support.

**Access** – development options should be at locations where there is sufficient access and should not cause problems with vehicular access or parking for local residents.

**Security** – development should take place in areas that is free from persistent anti-social behaviour and intrusive noise disturbance.

### The Market Context

**Market Fit** – any development should be designed to encourage the retention of existing customers – *busy executives in dormitory settlements, comfortably-off suburban families, older people living in large houses in mature suburbs* - and attract new ones to the area and be

placed at locations where the needs of those customers can be best met. The Destination Management Plan identified potential new markets as younger, pre and young family visitors from London and the south east. They have been largely unaffected by the recession, are interested in UK short breaks and looking for new ideas. They enjoy culture, physical activity, and independent shops, bars and restaurants. The area is already attracting some of this group attracted by the regeneration of Ramsgate and Margate.

**Beach Quality** – new approaches to beaches to attract new markets should be at beaches where there is a regular and effective beach and foreshore cleansing regime, good water quality, and where there is sufficient space to accommodate new options.

**Existing Facilities and Services** – new development should be at locations where there are existing complimentary facilities and services, to support these businesses and avoid setting up competing interests that may undercut current businesses.

**User Conflict** – new development or management approaches should not create any conflict with other existing user groups.

8.3 The development opportunities in Section 7 include the potential for small scale accommodation at St Mildred's Bay catering for the young family market, and at Westbrook Bay catering for the "young urbanite" segment.

8.4 There are three models for accommodation provision at Thanet's beaches:

**Promenade Based Units** – These would be free standing accommodation units that sat against the cliff wall on the promenade, in the same way that the beach huts currently do. There are companies that can provide stylish designs for 4/6 bed units that can be built on site. They would be removable if a flood risk assessment required them to be so, although in some examples at other locations the units are raised on galvanised steel frames to reduce the danger of flooding and reduce the need to remove them in the winter months.

**Beach Based Units** – along the lines of the Dutch model (see panel below) there are examples where beach accommodation is placed on the sand from April to October and removed for the winter period when floods from storm surge tides are more of a danger. They would need to be located at a beach where there was vehicular access as the typical form of removal is by using a lorry to pick up and carry the units off the sand.

**Beach "Pods" in Refurbished Buildings** – this option would allow the provision of small scale holiday accommodation spaces in existing buildings that need refurbishment. The example to follow is the beach pods created by Hemingway Design within the overall refurbishment of the Overstand building at Boscombe. The building's facilities include the Urban Reef restaurant, shower facilities, surf shop and surf school, and Boscombe Beach Office as well as the accommodation pods. Overnight stays are not permitted in the Boscombe example but it would be possible to design pods that allowed that option.

<http://www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk/projects/urban-design/boscombe-seafront>

8.5 Previous research into the viability of small scale accommodation (*Cast Interreg Project – Kent Coastal Analysis: Development Opportunities Report August 2012*) has shown that the cost of a well-designed, insulated unit fitted out to a high standard and sleeping 4 people is between £30,000 and £45,000 depending on the design. This includes installation costs assuming utilities are available at the beach. Other potential development costs include the provision of CCTV security.

8.6 Operational costs for a business running accommodation units will need to cover marketing, housekeeping and general repair/maintenance of the units, transport costs (if the units are removed in winter), and the cost of a lease from the Council to place the units at the beaches. Total operational costs are estimated at around 40% of turnover.

8.7 Income per unit is estimated at c. £10,000 a year based on 60% occupancy and average self-catering accommodation charges. It may be that occupancy is higher, and that the units can demand a higher weekly rate than average. In the Dutch examples below occupancy rates were running at 80 – 90% for 7 months and the average rates per week were £650 – providing a return of c.£15,000 p.a.

8.8 If accommodation units are provided as part of an existing businesses visitor offer – an addition to a hotels accommodation portfolio, or an added service to an existing beach business – then a small number of units, properly managed, could provide an additional income stream.

8.9 If an investor is seeking to run a business based solely on beach accommodation units then to make it commercially viable the minimum number of units under their management is 15 – 20. There are not many locations in Thanet that could absorb this number of units at one site. The units would need to be spread across different locations in smaller groups, but managed from a central service. In both cases, a small scale or a larger portfolio of units, the lease from the Council for the sites would need to be long-term to allow a return on investment.

8.10 Any consideration of potential sites for accommodation units based on the criteria for location set out above would need extensive consultation with local residents and interest groups, and for the Council to be clear about the terms and conditions of any lease to ensure the units were properly managed to conform to byelaws, apply to any statutory planning regulations and consent, the needs of other beach users, and the nature of communities in which they were placed.

8.11 It is recommended that in order to generate new beach based accommodation offers for visitors the developments at St Mildred's Bay, Westbrook Bay and Ramsgate Beach Club should, where viable, include accommodation options. In addition the Council should explore further the possibility of units at other beaches that fit the contexts set out above. Without having gone into great detail or consulted widely with local residents or businesses the Audit

findings indicate that accommodation could be potentially sited at beaches such as Stone, Dumpton Gap, and Minnis (prom based), Joss and Botany (Beach based).

## Dutch Beach Houses

Situated on the Dutch coast facing the North Sea there are good examples of beach accommodation provision. The two sets of houses pictured below are at Strandcamping Groede and Vrouwe Polder. They are both high quality units on the beach run by an adjoining campsite business at Groede, and a nearby hotel at Vrouwe Polder. Both sets have high design values although different style. The Vrouwe Polder units are a more tradition beach hut style, the Groede units modern in style.

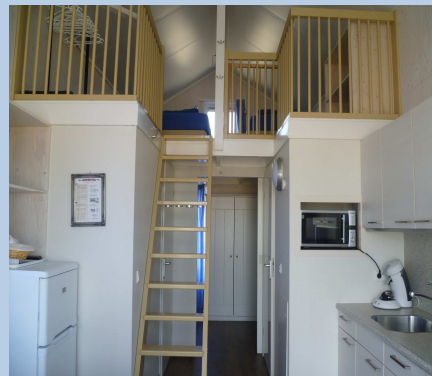
Both businesses run 15 units, paying the local Council who let the lease 1,500 euros per unit per annum. The lease allows for the units to be placed on the beach at the start of April and stay there until the end of October. Occupancy over the 28 week period runs at 80 – 90% for both businesses.

The units, which are looked after by 2 housekeepers, have gas central heating, and mains water electricity and sewage connections. Both sets of units offer 4 and 6 bed versions

The Vrouwe Polder huts cost 40,000 euros to build and install, the Groede units, with a higher design and fittings specification cost between 70 – 80,000 euros.

[www.strandcampinggroede.nl](http://www.strandcampinggroede.nl)

[www.strandbungalow.nl](http://www.strandbungalow.nl)



Dutch Beach Houses at Strandcamping Groede (left) and Strandbungalows (right)

## 9. Beach Management Options

9.1 The Destination Management Plan had as one of its priorities “*Actions that encourage the development of new activities along the coast and introduce new management models for appropriate beaches*”

9.2 The idea behind looking at different ways of managing beaches in Thanet is to improve the visitor offer by putting the services and facilities at a beach under one management regime responsible for that beach alone; to pass the direct responsibility for a number of operational tasks at a beach from the Council to a designated beach management company; and to allow that company to develop the beach and its facilities along the lines they feel is the most appropriate to improving the visitor offer.

9.3 At present the management and provision of services on public beaches is piecemeal. The offer to the visitor is not joined-up. Individual business concessions offer a variety of services to varying degrees of quality. Beach events are random. Public services are delivered by different local authority departments.

9.4 The cost to the Council of managing all the beaches is significant, far outweighing any revenues earned. In devolving the management and some operational activities to an external management company it could reduce the very large workload the Council faces in managing Thanet’s beaches, allowing central services to concentrate more fully on those beaches where the workload is high. It would, subject to agreement on the lease, provide the Council with an additional income stream from the letting.

9.5 If granted a long lease period that allowed them to build a viable business, a beach management company could offer a range of services that catered for market demand and attracted customers seeking the quality and services offered. The option recognises that local authority owners are not in a position to micro-manage the beach offer to the extent that we are proposing, and that the current model of leasing individual concessions for specific services – food and drink, play areas, deck chairs etc. does not allow services to be joined-up to improve quality of the beach offer, or to attract visitors out of season.

9.6 There are a number of issues that would need to be decided on depending on the beach concerned and the type of management model being envisaged:

**Current Concessions:** there are a large number of leases currently let to concession holders who provide a valuable service to visitors. These businesses should not, unless they are willing to do so, be displaced through the transfer of management responsibility. The options are:

- ▶ The company responsible for the management of the beach takes over the lease from the Council and manages concessions on the beach directly

- ▶ The leaseholder becomes part of the management team, sharing profits and being closely involved in the development of services and facilities on the beach
- ▶ The Council retains direct control of specific leases. This would have the disadvantage of not allowing the management company a measure of control over the type and quality of the services provided, but it would reassure existing concessionaires who might be concerned about having to deal with a new leaseholder

**Cleansing:** the cost of cleaning each beach is set out in the audits. While there are some services that could be easily passed over to be managed by people on site e.g. litter picking and bin emptying, there are some specialist services that the Council would need to retain e.g. sand bunding, seaweed removal, beach raking.

An agreement would need to be reached around the collection of litter picked from the beach and bins. It would be possible to design a system of storage on site that only required the Council to collect the refuse once or twice a week. There are examples on Dutch beaches where rubbish is kept in large pits dug into the sand until collection.

A decision would also be needed as to whether waste collected from a beach whose management has been devolved to a company should be treated as commercial waste commanding a fee for collection, but allowing the company the choice of who provides the service.

Given that the Council would be saving costs by not having to litter pick or empty bins at the beach the collection service could be offered as part of the lease arrangement.

**Byelaw Enforcement:** One of the advantages of devolving management responsibility to a site based company is that there will be people on hand to assist in the enforcement of byelaws and call the police if there are any problems.

Subject to Council approval, and the willingness of the management it may be possible to empower individuals to issue penalty notices at a specific beach to reinforce their management authority.

**Public Toilets:** where they are present the management company should be given the responsibility of cleaning and maintaining public toilets. Where they are not in place there would be the option for the company to provide toilet units to cater for demand as part of their lease conditions.

**Beach Huts:** A number of beaches have significant numbers of beach huts on site. There are two options for their management:

- ▶ Central management by Your Leisure. This would retain the status quo and allow Your Leisure to continue to receive income for rental that cross subsidises other leisure services in Thanet

- ▶ Devolution of the control to the beach management company. This would allow a joined approach to the management of beach huts with other facilities and services at the beach. It would also remove the need for a TDC Bay Inspector if, at the beach concerned, they were employed to oversee the huts on site. This would need to take into account the loss of income to Your Leisure.

**Car Parks:** if a beach where management is devolved has a car park provided primarily to service that beach – Joss, Minnis, St Mildred’s – there would need to be a decision about its management. The options are:

- ▶ To devolve the car park management - ticket checking, penalty notices, machine emptying, cleaning – to the on-site company and share in the revenue on the basis of an agreed split. This has the advantage of keeping the management of all facilities in one place and saving the Council some costs, but at the expense of some revenue. There would also be an incentive, through a share of the revenue, for the company to ensure fees are paid, and encourage more visitors to use the car park.
- ▶ Council retains control of car park – allows the Council to apply a standard approach to all car parks and retain the revenue. Although in this instance there is the option to agree that the Council takes up to a certain level of revenue (say the current figure when a management lease is signed) and that any increase in people using, or paying to use, the car park as a result of improved management, marketing, events or extension of the season generated by the company would accrue to them. The revenue split could be reviewed each year.

## Beach Management Scenarios

9.7 To take forward a new process of beach management, that may take the form of one of the below scenarios, the Council will be required to go through an open and transparent process in order to put this in place. This process would likely draw out the most suitable option for beach management as and when this can be taken forward.

9.8 There are three potential beach management models that would allow the transfer of the beach management to organisations working with the Council to deliver facilities and services. In all the models set out below the baseline for any new system of management is that the beaches shall retain free access for the general public at all times, and that no barriers to free access should be put in place. This does not exclude the possibility that some areas of the beach would be given over to a particular activity, as they are at present e.g. children’s play, water sports.

9.9 In all cases the best method to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Council in devolving responsibility, and the ambitions of the management company are met is to set up a service level agreement (SLA) with the concessionaire as part of the lease. A SLA records a common understanding about services, priorities, responsibilities, and guarantees. Each area



of service should have the "level of service" defined. In some contracts penalties may be agreed upon in the case of non-compliance of the SLA. It is important to note that the "agreement" relates to the services the customer receives, and not how the service provider delivers that service. It would be important to allow the operator freedom to develop their offer and the flexibility to take it in new directions depending on market demand over the lease period.

## The Community-Led Model

9.10 In this scenario the management of a beach could be devolved to a Community Interest Company (CIC) or local Trust set up by community groups or local councils on a long term lease. Local residents, parish or town councils and the Thanet District Council ward councillor would have a seat on the Board of the CIC to ensure services were joined up and the beach was managed for the needs of the community.

9.11 An alternative would be to consider the management of the beach to a CIC/Trust as a community asset, giving them a lease as well as management control of the beach.

9.12 In either case it would have the advantage of putting the management of a key asset for the community in the hands of the local community for them to operate, and therefore, to a large extent, control the activities and operation of that beach in a manner that suits their wishes. It would also provide an income stream for the community that could be re-invested in local facilities and services.

9.13 A disadvantage of this scenario may be that the community wishes to restrict the number of visitors to the beach to solve any local conflicts. It should be a part of any SLA agreement or asset handover that the needs of visitors are catered for at least at the current level in order to maintain the beaches appeal to visitor markets and secure concessionaires businesses. In this scenario:

- ▶ A lease and SLA would be agreed with the CIC/Trust for an agreed long term period with regular break points for review, or the asset would be managed by the community on agreed terms
- ▶ Current leases could be passed to the new company to manage and collect the income
- ▶ Litter picking and bin emptying would devolve to the management company.
- ▶ Responsibility for byelaw enforcement could devolve to the management company
- ▶ The rental and management of beach huts could devolve to the management company to provide an income stream
- ▶ Management of any public toilet facilities would devolve to the management company
- ▶ Undertaking and managing any events on the beach would devolve to the management company

9.14 This scenario is most likely to be successful at beaches in suburban centres where the community already has a strong interest in the management of the beach (e.g. Minnis Bay,

West Bay, Walpole Bay), or in town centres where the town council and other interest groups have a significant stake in the beaches smooth running and success in attracting visitors (e.g. Viking Bay, Ramsgate Main Sands)

### The Co-operative Model

9.15 In this instance the management of the beach would be devolved to a Co-operative company made up of the current businesses operating on the beach. Ideally the company would be made up of all the businesses involved so they all have a stake in the beach management.

9.16 The advantage of this set up is that operations would devolve to people who already have a strong interest in, and knowledge of, how the beach operates and have a keen interest in providing visitors with an improved service to retain and develop their customer base. They are also likely to have clear views on the way the beach should be managed.

9.17 In this model it would be helpful to have a District councillor represented on the company's board in order to ensure clear lines of communication between the company and the Council as leaseholders, and a local community representative to ensure residents had some engagement and a stake in the beaches operation.

9.18 It would only work at beaches where the individual businesses were prepared to take responsibility and be willing to work together. Income generated by each business would be kept by that business and the individual leases and licences would still be between the Council and the concessionaire. The purpose of the company would be to manage the operational aspects of the beach and relieve the Council of that direct responsibility. The District Council would still need to cover the costs of cleansing, toilets etc. but would be devolving their management and delivery to the beach based business. In this scenario:

- ▶ A lease and SLA would be agreed with the company for an agreed long term period with regular break points for review
- ▶ Current leases would remain with the Council and be managed as now
- ▶ Litter picking and bin emptying would devolve to the management company
- ▶ Responsibility for byelaw enforcement could devolve to the management company
- ▶ The rental and management of beach huts could devolve to the management company to provide an income stream
- ▶ Management of any public toilet facilities would devolve to the management company
- ▶ Undertaking and managing any events on the beach would devolve to the management company

9.19 This scenario is most likely to be successful at beaches where there are a relatively small number of concessionaires who have a strong business interest in the beaches' attraction to visitors and who provide complimentary services, and where the beach is an easily defined,

single entity for which boundaries for the management responsibility can be easily drawn (e.g. Joss Bay, Stone Bay, Dumpton Gap, Palm Bay)

## The Private Sector Model

9.20 This scenario would see the lease for the management of the beach given to a private sector company to manage the beach. The advantage of this is that a commercial company is more likely to seek to invest in new facilities, events, and services to improve the visitor offer and therefore the income generated. Continued free public access to the foreshore and sea would be central to any arrangement.

9.21 It is only likely to be a viable enterprise if the company is given a single lease for the beach operation, including the existing concessions, and freedom to add to them as they deem fit, to provide the income needed to make the business work.

9.22 The advantage of this arrangement is that it is the scenario most likely to encourage investment in new facilities and services, most likely to allow the beach to develop a coherent style or “brand” to appeal to specific visitor markets, and the one that allows the Council to devolve responsibility for the management of the beach including waste disposal, seaweed collection and disposal, beach raking and levelling etc.

9.23 In return a company would expect to be granted a long term lease to exploit the commercial opportunities, and some understanding from the Council of the need to allow new structures and facilities at the beach.

9.24 The disadvantage of this set up is that there will be existing concessions that would need to be considered and is only likely to work at locations that are vacant or where current concessionaires are happy to leave (unless they want to take the model forward). It would be possible to let a lease to a private company and then transfer existing leases to them as they come to an end of their current term (assuming they are not protected tenancies). Alternatively, a private sector operator may be happy to take on the management of the beach and work with existing concessions to provide the visitor offer, bringing them into the management team.

9.25 The management of beaches by the private sector could come from a company set up specifically to tender for a lease, or from an existing business already operating in or around the beach such as a hotel, café or activity provider. In this scenario:

- ▶ A lease and SLA would be agreed with the company for an agreed long term period with regular break points for review
- ▶ Current leases would be passed to the company, or special arrangements would need to be made for existing concessions to operate within the new management structure

- ▶ Litter picking and bin emptying would devolve to the management company as well as the responsibility for waste disposal
- ▶ Responsibility for byelaw enforcement could devolve to the management company.
- ▶ The rental and management of beach huts could devolve to the management company to provide an income stream
- ▶ Management of any public toilet facilities would devolve to the management company
- ▶ Undertaking and managing any events on the beach would devolve to the management company

9.26 This model is most likely to be successful at beaches where the area under company management is easily defined, where rolling up concessions into one lease is possible and where there is capacity for the development of new facilities and services. The development opportunities outlined above at St Mildred's Bay and Westbrook Bay could lead to the opportunity to explore private sector beach management as part of the development outcomes.

9.27 It is recommended that in order to explore the opportunities further the Council seek expressions of interested parties to run a pilot management project at one of Thanet's beaches to test the concept.



## 10. Funding Opportunities

10.1 There are a range of different public sector and social investment grants and investment schemes designed to help communities and businesses. Identified below are some schemes which potentially offer sources of funding for the development and management options set out in the Plan.

### **Community Assets and Services Grants:**

10.2 The Social Investment Business (SIB) is a specialist fund manager and has made and managed over 1300 investments in civil society organisations ranging from under £5,000 to almost £7 million. SIB invest in viable, non-bankable projects: facilitating their move into more enterprising ventures; strengthening them; investing in excellence; and bringing to scale the most innovative ideas.

10.3 The Community Assets and Services Grant can provide support to community organisations running a local service or taking over the management of a local building or land of community value? They have a range of grants available to help with the process of taking over a service or an asset.

10.4 Applications can be made for these grants at any point during the year. Capital grants are only available till 26 June 2014.

[Pre-feasibility grants](#): Up to £10,000 to help applicants through the early stages of assessing the opportunity and developing a management/governance structure.

[Feasibility grants](#): Up to £100,000 to help you prepare to take over the asset or service by assessing in detail all the elements that would make up the delivery and management of a service.

[Capital grants](#): Grants between £100,000 and £500,000 to buy or refurbish a community asset. The last bidding round was open till noon on Thursday 26 June 2014. It is not yet known whether there will be another round.

10.5 This fund may (subject to application) be able to offer support to:

- ▶ Capacity building, feasibility study, and development costs for community groups or a business co-operative group looking to take over the management of a beach
- ▶ A feasibility study for establishing a beach club at Ramsgate Main Sands

### **Reaching Communities England Big Lottery Funding:**

10.6 The Reaching Communities programme has two strands.

- ▶ Funding for projects that help people and communities most in need. Grants are available from £10,000, upwards and funding can last for up to 5 years. If applicants are seeking more than £500,000 they must call the Big Lottery before they apply to discuss why they believe a larger project is appropriate. There is no upper limit for total project costs. The support can fund, salaries, running costs, a contribution towards core costs and equipment. It can also fund up to £100,000 for land, buildings or refurbishment capital costs.
- ▶ The buildings strand of Reaching Communities provides funding for land and buildings projects costing more than £100,000. It can also provide revenue funding to help to get the building running and deliver project activities. Funding is available for building grants up to 2015 and there are currently no deadlines for applications. However, the programme is regularly reviewed and early applications are being encouraged. So that this funding makes the biggest difference to those most in need, it targets buildings or sites based in the most deprived 'Lower Super Output Areas' in England.

10.7 This fund may (subject to application) be able to offer support for:

- ▶ Building a beach club at Ramsgate Main Sands (the centre of Ramsgate is eligible for funding under this scheme).

#### **LEP European Structural and Investment Funds:**

10.8 The South East Local Enterprise Partnership – covering Kent and Essex – is bidding for funds from the European Commission via its European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy. It seeks, amongst a range of priorities, to improve the economy of the areas seaside resort towns, create new jobs, particularly for young people, and help small businesses get started and flourish in the region.

10.9 This fund may (subject to application) be able to offer support for:

- ▶ Baseline refurbishment and repair of buildings/structures at Viking, St Mildred's and Westbrook Bays to allow private sector investment and creation of new jobs
- ▶ Building a beach club at Ramsgate Main Sands
- ▶ Supporting the development of small scale accommodation units at sites around the Thanet Coast

#### **Interreg Funding**

10.10 Thanet, working with Visit Kent has been successful in using Interreg monies to fund the development of this plan and the beach audits and some funding will likely be utilised for delivering some of the recommendations. The current round of Interreg Funding is coming to a close; however future rounds could be used to help deliver the recommendations of the plan and improvements to the coastline. This is likely to be delivered in partnership with Visit Kent.

### **The Coastal Communities Fund**

10.11 The Coastal Communities Fund is funded by the Government with income from the Crown Estate's marine assets. Funding is available in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Fund is managed in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund's 'BIG Fund'. For Round 3 (2014 to 2017) the total budget available for the Fund in England is £68 million. Invitations to bid for 2014 were announced in March 2014. Organisations that bid for funding will be encouraged (but not required) to match funds with other sources of money.

10.12 This fund may (subject to application) be able to offer support for:

- ▶ Baseline refurbishment and repair of buildings/structures at Viking, St Mildred's and Westbrook Bays to allow private sector investment and creation of new jobs
- ▶ Building a beach club at Ramsgate Main Sands

### **Heritage Enterprise – Heritage Lottery Fund**

10.13 Heritage Enterprise supports enterprising community organisations across the UK to rescue neglected historic buildings and sites and unlock their economic potential. Grants are made from £100,000 to £5million. The Heritage Enterprise grant aims to breathe new life into historic sites by repairing, adapting and giving them a productive new use. By funding much of the repair costs HLF hope to encourage private developers to work with community organisations to deliver commercially viable schemes.

10.14 This fund may (subject to application) be able to offer support for:

- ▶ Refurbishment of the Westbrook Loggia



## 11. Beach Audits

11.1 To complement the Beach Management Plan, full Audits for each of the 17 beaches are included as part of the work. The Audits are presented as separate documents for ease of handling and include (as at Spring 2014) details on:

- the condition of the beaches infrastructure and building
- the applicable byelaws for that beach
- the facilities and services on offer
- beach awards and water quality details
- car parking and access information
- the particular planning policies, environmental designations, and flood defence policies that apply
- the cleansing schedule for the beach during the 24 week summer season

11.2 The audits also include a list of the concessions let by the Council at each beach and the total income from all concessions at that beach. They do not include the annual charges for each concession as this is considered to be commercially sensitive information. Nor do they show total concession income at beaches where there is only one concessionaire.

11.3 Other costs and income streams at each beach have been identified and recorded. They are:

- Annual cleansing costs – the figure shown is the apportionment of the forecast cleansing costs for 2014 based on the level of service at each beach
- Toilet provision and maintenance – the cost of the cleansing, water and electricity for each toilet
- Thanet District Council Management Costs – the estimate per beach is based on the apportionment of costs for the Lifeguard service (where applicable), sand levelling, cliff lifts and tidal pools (where applicable), maintenance of proms, shelters, seats and signs, the Thanet Coast Project, and the costs for staff directly involved in beach management.
- Car Parking Income – only included where the car park is serving a specific beach
- Events Income

11.4 This allows the audits to present a broad calculation on how much the management of each beach costs, or earns, the Council. This is a guideline figure that would need to be viewed, in most cases, as an investment in terms of the number of visitors well managed clean beaches with good facilities can attract, and their contribution to the local economy. However, it is a starting point in better understanding the real costs of managing individual beaches and

identifying where costs might be reduced or income streams generated through different approaches to beach management.

11.5 At the end of each audit there is a table that lists Short Term (this year), Medium Term (2015) and Long Term (2016 and beyond) actions that need to be taken to improve the visitor offer at the beach. The table headings are colour-coded – those beaches in red are identified as being where there is the greatest need for a range of short and longer term actions, those in orange are identified as beaches where a range of actions are needed, but not as urgently as red, and those coloured green are beaches where “quick win” short term actions should be pursued but that there is no pressing need for medium or longer term action.

### **Future Management of the Audits**

11.6 The audit work done as part of the preparation of the Plan is seen very much as the first step in the process. Compiling all the information about specific beaches in one place to use as a management tool offers the ability to:

- highlight issues where delivery is not effective
- co-ordinate and prioritise beach management actions
- identify areas where new management approaches could save the Council money
- identify potential locations for new development opportunities on the beaches

11.7 It will be important to update, expand and improve the level of information held within the Audits if they are to prove useful for the future, and to share that information with all staff and partner organisations involved in managing Thanet’s beaches.

11.8 To ensure consistency in updating and improving the Audits, and to avoid duplication and mismanagement it will be important to designate the task to a specific officer. This will ensure that one individual has “ownership” of the Audits and is in control of entering any new data and circulating revised copies to relevant parties.