
Beach Management Plan

To: **Cabinet – 13 November 2014**

Main Portfolio Area: **Tourism**

By: **Cllr Iris Johnston, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Community Services**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Thanet Wide**

Summary: This report brings the Beach Management Plan forward for adoption by Cabinet. This report is one of the key projects of the Destination Management Plan. It provides recommendations for improvements to Thanet's beaches.

For Decision

1.0 Destination Management Plan

- 1.1 Thanet was the first local authority in Kent to develop a Destination Management Plan (DMP). The Plan was adopted in September 2013 and Tourism Works were brought on board in November to help facilitate engagement with the sector, and to support the Steering Group and Working Groups in taking forward actions in the DMP. Cabinet were updated in September 2014 about the work that has been carried out so far.
- 1.2 The Council is working in partnership with Visit Kent to support the delivery of the DMP and to help provide access to funding for a number of the actions. Later this month, the Council will be launching the Marketing Toolkit as part of the Telling Our Stories priority.
- 1.3 Through perception research to support the development of the DMP by Visit Kent it was identified that overwhelmingly Thanet's beaches and bays are what motivate people to visit Thanet. This is why Beach Management and Development was a priority project and led to the development of the Beach Management Plan.
- 1.4 In July this year funds were allocated from the DMP Reserves to match some Interreg funding from Visit Kent. This funding was to help deliver some of the recommendations from the draft Beach Management Plan. A decision notice was used to access the funds due to the timescale that the Interreg funding needed to be spent by.

2.0 Delivery of the Beach Management and Development Priority

- 2.1 The Beach Management Plan was funded through an Interreg project. The brief required evidence to be gathered, including building on the wealth of knowledge and experience the Council has across all departments about beach management. Drawing on previous research that had been conducted including workshops and consultation to provide a robust evidence base and industry support to develop the next steps.

- 2.2 An audit of the facilities at each of the beaches and bays has been undertaken including an assessment of the condition, quality and distinctiveness as well as gaps and opportunities. The audits also include information on specific signage and access, seasonal beach users, concessions operating and any potential clashes in the different uses. 17 audits of Thanet's beaches and bays were prepared and provide a tool, to be kept up-to-date, that will provide evidence for decision making and support the management of the coastline.
- 2.3 The evidence that was gathered allowed the consultants to set some strategic priorities for the Council to consider for each of the beaches and bays. Identifying key improvement and development opportunities to help improve the experience at the destination was a key requirement for this piece of work. Consideration was required about the pressure on public sector funding requesting that innovative ways of delivering services needed to be included.
- 2.4 The aim of the plan was to provide a joined up and co-ordinated programme of prioritised beach-by-beach improvements, identifying opportunities for the management of the beaches that are freely available to everyone. Incorporating the best creative and commercial ideas to enhance quality, protect the environment and deliver new distinctive experiences will ultimately lead to an award winning leading UK seaside destination.
- 2.5 The Plan highlights that with the exception of a small number of freehold cafes the visitor services and facilities provided on beaches are delivered by concessionaires with leases or licences, let and managed by the Council. The services on the beach, including toilet cleansing, beach huts and the Lifeguard services, are all contracted out and delivered by other organisations.
- 2.6 The research identified that the total cost of beach management is somewhere around £1m per annum to the Council. This is not exact and does not include things like maintenance, legal and estates costs and seaweed collection. Income from the beaches has been estimated at around £700,000, however a large proportion (approximately £480,000) of this is income from the beach huts and cross subsidies other leisure activities managed by Your Leisure.
- 2.7 The research shows the main problems and issues facing the management of the beaches including: Litter Collection and Cleansing; Anti-Social Behaviour and Byelaw Enforcement; Public Toilets; Concession Leases and Licences; Cliff Lifts; Council Owned Buildings and Kiosks; Showers; Privately Owned Buildings and Structure; Beach Huts; Seaweed; Car Parking and Tidal Pools.
- 2.8 The plan notes that the Council faces mounting workloads and costs associated with beach management at a time when staff and budget resources are stretched. Therefore it is important to consider new ways of delivering beach management - seeking to improve the visitor experience rather than struggling to hold back a rising tide of problems.

3.0 Beach Management Plan Recommendations

3.1 The Beach Management Plan includes 16 recommendations from the Consultants to action, in order to take the Beach Management and Development priority of the DMP forward. These are in the table below and Officers have identified suggested actions against the proposed recommendations.

	Recommendation	Suggested actions
1.	Undertake a full audit of all Council costs in managing beaches to establish clarity over the exact cost.	The focus of further analysis will be on projects that require a business decision in relation to individual sites to assist with making informed choices about their future development and management.
2.	Carry out a programme of minor repair and re-painting of Council buildings at beaches	<p>There is already a programme of repairs and maintenance and this recommendation reiterates the importance of this area of activity. Having been raised through the plan it is important to highlight what is being delivered, which can be seen below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Repainting of five foreshore toilets blocks (Dumpton, Botany Bay, Broadstairs Viking bay Harbour toilets inside, Viking Bay middle beach toilets inside & outside, St Mildreds Bay, Westgate including a new roofs and windows. – Joss Bay, Broadstairs programme to be completed this financial year which will include two new roofs. – Resurfacing of car park at Botany Bay <p>An inventory of the coastal shelters and showers with an understanding of potential costs of repairs, options for refurbishment including funding and organisations who could be custodians of the shelters to ensure their future sustainability is being developed.</p>
3.	Publicise the cleansing schedule and discuss litter management with beach businesses	The cleansing of beaches and surrounding areas is adjusted both to the time of year, day of the week and to reflect expected weather conditions. Additional agency resources are used to deal with these variations. A schedule of cleansing activity will reflect the basic position of the council, though specific events will lead to localised increases and decreases in actual resources.
4.	Set up a small grant scheme to help concessionaires refurbish their facilities	<p>This is not considered to be a priority and will be discuss at the DMP Steering Group to understand their view on whether this would be a worthwhile activity to promote to Cabinet.</p> <p>Any consideration of the council putting funding in would be required to come back to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>(Concessions include the small businesses that hold leases/licences with the Council on the beaches)</p>

5.	Establish a system of internal consultation on renewal of concession leases and licences	Through the restructure that came into play in April of this year, Economic Development and Asset Management are now in the same team. This allows for on-going consultation in relation the concession leases and licences along the beaches. All proposals would go through the Corporate Property Asset Management Group.
6.	Continue discussion with Police over enforcement	<p>Kent Police are a key member of Thanet Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) which analyses crime and ASB data yearly and then forms actions to try and tackle the emerging issues. The 2014-15 plan highlighted anti-social behaviour on the beaches as a focus for the year. As a result a pilot was run trialling PCSOs based on the beaches throughout the peak season. Figures are being collated at the moment but initial views showed that crime and ASB on the beach dropped as a result. It is proposed that the TCSP remains the vehicle for these continued discussions.</p> <p>The enforcement of bylaws is a complex and difficult issue. Bylaws are not enforceable by the Police and are therefore a resource issue for the Council. Thanet has a large number of bylaws that need to be reviewed, an initial meeting with officers has been held With a view to identifying what resources are required to review these bylaws.</p>
7.	Look at best practice on enforcement at other resorts	A working group consisting of Community Safety, Street Scene enforcement, Legal and Street Cleansing has already been held and will reconvene to make recommendations over byelaws and orders under the new ASB legislation. This working group could undertake the review of other resorts.
8.	Renew outdoor shower units at beaches	External Interreg funding was accessed through Visit Kent and the report is being finalised that carried out a review of the existing showers and identified opportunities for improving this provision.
9.	Review the role of Bay Inspectors with a view to giving them a greater role in beach management	Discussions to take place with Your Leisure
10.	Commission a Feasibility Brief for St Mildred's Bay and discuss ideas with local residents	Priority Beach – next steps identified in 3.2 Beach Audit in Annex 8
11.	Commission a Feasibility Brief for Westbrook Bay and discuss ideas with local residents	Priority Beach – next steps identified in 3.2 Beach Audit in Annex 4
12.	Establish a Steering Group including all interested parties to draw up a Masterplan for the future of Viking Bay	Priority Beach – next steps identified in 3.2 Beach Audit in Annex 6
13.	Open discussions with Ramsgate Town Council and other interested groups with a view to establishing a	Priority Beach – next steps identified in 3.2 Beach Audit in Annex 2

	Beach Club at Ramsgate Main Sands	Funding accessed through the DMP reserves, to match the Interreg funding, has allowed officers to develop a brief to take to the market place for external expertise to deliver this. Planning Solutions Consulting Limited and Saville Jones Architects delivered a successful pitch for this work, with a huge variety of relevant and delivered experience in this area. The inception meeting was held in the first week of October and the final report is due at the end of the year. Consultation with stakeholders has already started.
14.	Include accommodation in development options at Westbrook, St Mildred's and Ramsgate and explore other options further	Next steps identified in 3.2
15.	Seek expressions of interest for a pilot beach management scheme	This is considered to be a longer term project as an area of activity on its own, however when development opportunities arise on the priority beaches the recommendations from the consultants will be considered in relation to the management of activities on the beaches; this might include cleansing and toilets and how they can be bought together within development opportunities.
16.	Identify an individual officer within the Council who will have responsibility to hold, distribute, and regularly update the Beach Audit sheets	There will be an annual update of the audit in relation to key developments and changes affecting individual bays.

A clear project plan and business case will be developed to support delivery of the plan to ensure that it fits with the Council's priorities and financial procedures.

3.2 Priority Beach's – next steps:

Four beaches and bays were considered by the consultants as priorities to take forward in order to improve the destination. These beaches were chosen due to significant infrastructure requirements or opportunities that they presented. Each one will be taken in turn below, in order of their prioritisation, following officers having reviewed the Beach Management Plan report.

- 3.2.1 The first beach to be taken forward is the feasibility study for **Ramsgate Main Sands** (Annex 2: Beach Audit; Annex 3: proposed site plan). As highlighted in the above table, consultants are on board to deliver a detailed feasibility study identifying the viability of a beach club, including the mix of services, facilities and activities required to make it relevant and viable.

As part of the scope of this project the Council will need to look at granting a disposal (for lease) of the site. The length of lease is likely to be important in order that an organisation could come forward and be able to get the required level of investment. A project proposal will be developed, using the information from the feasibility study to take the site through to the Corporate Property Asset Management Group.

- 3.2.2 The second site that will be looked at is the **Westbrook Bay Loggia** (Annex 4: Beach Audit; Annex 5: proposed site plan). The plan suggests that there should be a feasibility study to be carried out to identify next steps for the Loggia as a centre for beach and visitor activity. This could include exploring new management options for the building and associated services.

Officers will develop a proposal to take to the Corporate Property Asset Management Group that will likely include a request that there is a mixture of uses on the Loggia site that has a relationship with the beach. It is unlikely that the Council will need to develop a feasibility plan for the site and there is potential to identify market opportunities to take this site forward.

The Council had a condition survey completed of the building and this highlighted that there are capital costs of around £750,000 required on the Loggia in order to bring it up to standard. These costs would not be covered by the existing tenancies and therefore the Council will need to identify capital funds in order to carry out the works. The proposal will need to consider this and further discussions will need to take place with existing tenants.

In developing a proposal, consideration will need to be given to existing concessionaires and Your Leisure with regard to surrounding Beach Huts and the Bay Inspectors unit. The Beach Management Plan also highlights the opportunity to have some form of overnight accommodation on Westbrook beach and this should be considered as part of the mix of uses in the proposal being developed.

The other recommendation was to develop some motor home provision on Barnes Car Park – this will need to be considered as part of the Local Plan and any other possible requirements for the site in order to bring this forward. There are however no other designated areas with facilities that have been brought forward and there is a degree of demand for these services.

- 3.2.3 Establishing a Steering Group, to include all relevant/interested parties to draw up a master plan for the future of **Viking Bay** (Annex 6: Beach Audit; Annex 7: proposed site plan). This is a large piece of work and is the third site to be focused on. It is considered to be important due to the level of infrastructure development that is

required but also the opportunity that could come from redeveloping the bay in a co-ordinated way.

The work required will be to look at all of the assets at the back of the bay, with a master plan developed to identify the best uses for this space. This will need to take into consideration the current concessions and beach hut income related to Your Leisure. It was advised that in order to deal with Viking Bay in the best way a coordinated approach to the whole site would be required, in order to provide the best destination experience.

Funding will be required to go through the master planning process and a proportion of this is likely to be sought from the DMP Reserves. As a project this is going into the Economic Development and Asset Management Service Plan for next year. Once the master planning is completed officers will bring forward the plan through the Corporate Property Asset Management Group.

3.2.4 The last bay to look at, from the recommendations in the Plan is **St Mildreds Bay** (Annex 8: Beach Audit; Annex 9: proposed site plan). This bay has multiple uses and ownership/management. Consideration again will need to be given to the Your Leisure contract in relation to the existing beach hut provision; however these could be included in the redevelopment of this area. There are two café's on this site one in use and the other vacant. A Project Plan will be developed and brought to the Corporate Property Asset Management Group.

3.3 Currently this paper does not directly request any funding from the DMP Reserves, however there are likely to be requirements for funding coming forward to pay for marketing and advertising fees for some of the sites and to be able to develop a master plan for Viking Bay as part of next year's Economic Development and Asset Management Service Plan. A paper will be expected to come to Cabinet shortly with more information about these requires and as a request for funds, alongside other delivery opportunities in the DMP.

4.0 Options

4.1 **Option 1:** Note the Beach Management Plan but not take forward any of the recommendations.

This will create a position whereby the infrastructure is not improved, capital costs will be sought from internal sources to maintain some of the assets and the assets along the beach will need support improving the destination.

4.2 **Option 2:** Adopt the Beach Management Plan as providing strategic direction for the beaches in Thanet and agree the recommendations proposed by officers, allowing them to take forward the required work as identified in 3.1 and 3.2.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 Financial and VAT

5.1.1 The financial resources currently available to deliver the beach management plan are the £500k allocation made for destination management. Financing any major projects will rely primarily on drawing in external funding. Work on the project will be kept under review to ensure that unnecessary work is not committed to schemes that are not affordable.

5.1.2 Due to the complexities of VAT; each project will seek VAT advice prior to progression.

5.2 Legal

5.2.1 Adopting the Beach Management Plan does not in itself have any legal implications. Allowing officers to take forward the recommendations will require a review of each recommendation in order to identify whether there are any specific legal requirements.

5.3 Corporate

5.3.1 The DMP supports the delivery of the below priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 2012-2016:

Priority 1: support the growth of our economy and the number of people in work

Priority 3: support our community and voluntary organisations

Priority 8: support excellent and diverse cultural facilities and activities for our residents and visitors

Priority 9: support a broad range of sports, leisure and coastal activities

Priority 10: influence the work of other agencies to ensure the best outcomes for Thanet

Priority 11: protect and preserve our public open spaces

5.3.2 Tourism and the visitor economic is a priority in Thanet, recognised by the Corporate Plan and the Economic Growth and Regeneration Strategy. The Economic Impact of Tourism in Thanet (2011) identified that there were a total of 3,128,000 visitors, creating a total economic impact of £230,373,000 and 5,477 jobs – highlighting its importance to the local area.

5.3.3 This report enables the Council to deal with some significant infrastructure issues that are around the Thanet coast, particularly on the four priority beaches. The ambition is, in adopting the report and dealing with some of the priority areas the Council will in the long run reduce capital costs and potentially raise revenue.

5.4 Equity and Equalities

5.4.1 The adoption of this report does not directly impact the equity or equalities policies for the Council. There are a number of recommendations and development opportunities that when they are taken forward these policies will be considered.

5.4.2 The Beach Management Plan was developed in consultation with key stakeholders that have a relationship with the development of Thanet's coastline, this was important to ensure that the recommendations were relevant and supported.

6.0 Recommendation(s)

6.1 Cabinet are requested to adopt the Beach Management Plan and agree the recommendations proposed by officers, allowing them to take forward the required work as identified in 3.2 and 3.3, subject to existing delegations and budgetary restrictions.

7.0 Decision Making Process

7.1 This is a non-key decision subject to call in.

Contact Officer:	Louise Askew, Economic Development Manager, 577178
Reporting to:	Edwina Crowley, Head of Economic Development and Asset Management

Annex List

Annex 1	Beach Management Plan
Annex 2	Ramsgate Main Sands Beach Audit
Annex 3	Ramsgate Main Sands proposed site plan
Annex 4	Westbrook Bay with Beach Audit
Annex 5	Westbrook Bay proposed site plan
Annex 6	Viking Bay Beach Audit
Annex 7	Viking Bay proposed site plan
Annex 8	St Mildreds Bay Beach Audit
Annex 9	St Mildreds Bay proposed site plan

Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
Destination Management Plan	At Thanet.gov.uk or through request to the Council officers

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	Paul Cook, Interim Director of Corporate Resources & s151 officer
Legal	Steven Boyle, Interim Legal Services Manager & Monitoring Officer