

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Regeneration and Development Panel		
DATE:	12 th March 2019		
TITLE:	Report of the River Informal Working Group		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy Development		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Regeneration Performance and Economic Development		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Members of the River Informal Working Group and relevant officers.		
OPEN/EXEMPT	OPEN	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
<p>At its meeting on 3rd April 2018, the Regeneration and Development Panel established the River Informal Working Group with its Terms of Reference being to investigate the future of the Pontoons, Sail the Wash, use of the River and inland waterways.</p> <p>This report summarises the work carried out by the Informal Working Group and presents their recommendations for consideration by the Regeneration and Development Panel.</p>
OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reject the recommendations put forward by the Informal Working Group. 2. Support some/all of the recommendations and present them to the relevant Cabinet Member for consideration and/or submission to Cabinet if required.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council endorse the vision and objectives set out in The Sail the Wash initiative and that the Council continue to support and encourage further marine leisure activity of the river and the Wash. <p><u>In the Long Term:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Support consideration to longer term development of marine leisure activity at Boal Quay. <p><u>In the Short/Medium Term:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Endorse the recommendations set out in the 'Development of Marine Leisure Activity in the Wash' by P D Harvey Consulting, 2018 4. Develop further the facilities at the King's Lynn Visitor Pontoons. The Informal Working Group put forward options for this: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support the Stage 2 application to the Coastal Community Fund to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extend the existing visitor pontoons to accommodate demand at peak times. - install swing moorings to start the provision of permanent mooring facilities in King's Lynn. - improve mooring and anchorage in the Wash. - develop further the marketing of Sail the Wash. - Employment of Marine Officer to deal with marketing and meet and greet.

- b. Discussions to be held with the owners of the Sea Cadets building regarding potential use of the facilities they had available for toilet and shower facilities. (preferred option).
- c. Provide a solution for waste disposal at Baker Lane.

5. That the Council acknowledge that the existing slipway is not fit for general marine purposes and give consideration to the installation of a new slipway, or relocation of the existing slipway at Boal Quay or an alternative appropriate location as part of the Nelson Quay redevelopment..

6. Support the Environment Agency to make improvements to the facilities available at Saddlebow including the installation of additional moorings and better utilisation of the existing pedestrian and cycle link between Saddlebow and King's Lynn including marketing and promotion.

7. The relevant Portfolio Holder engage in initial discussions with ABP regarding the potential provision of lift and store facilities in King's Lynn.

8. Officers engage with the Environment Agency to monitor the effect of the Denver Visioning Statement on the development of the river.

9. That if the CCF Bid is unsuccessful the Regeneration and Development Panel give consideration to reconvening the Informal Working Group to explore if there are any alternative options.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To improve the offer along the river and the facilities available to develop King's Lynn as a more attractive and accessible tourism destination for the marine leisure market.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on 3rd April 2018, the Regeneration and Development Panel established the River Informal Working Group with its Terms of Reference being to investigate the future of the Pontoons, Sail the Wash, use of the River and inland waterways.

1.2 The Working Group were aware from the outset that the River has played a significant part in the History and Life of King's Lynn, and contributed to the town's economic prosperity. The economic life of the river however is in decline, and its use for social activities sporadic (albeit successful) and, unlike other areas, has not benefitted from a comprehensive redevelopment to restore its prosperity or enhance the life of the Town from a full time leisure perspective. The underdevelopment of a significant asset to the town could be addressed by the adoption of a wider long term comprehensive vision for the river and immediate area.

1.3 To address this and to inform the work of the group, the group were briefed on the aims and objectives of the existing Sail the Wash initiative and other developments along the river front, and believe that rather than a piecemeal approach a holistic and positive vision for the whole river, involving all parties, would be of significant commercial benefit to the borough, and be mutually beneficial to the developments along the river and in the immediate hinterland. Some of the issues considered by the group and subsequent recommendations reflect this approach.

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- 1.4 Lastly the Informal Working Group understood that as the Council's ambition to redevelop Boal Quay and Nelson Quay as a priority as the land is within its gift, the working group felt that to maximise the full potential of this scheme and to drive value to that development, the ultimate objective should be to produce an overall vision of how the river could be developed alongside the 'land based' development involving other parties such as the Conservancy Board and Port Authorities and again some of the recommendations reflect this approach.
- 1.5 The Informal Working Group noted, but did not pursue, issues around the Fishing Co-operative and the modernisation required at the of Fisher Fleet Quay (at ABP's site) which will have to be reviewed and resolved if the river front is to be fully utilised.
- 1.6 The wide remit of this working group was felt to be a place to raise these issues whilst making appropriate recommendations to take matters forward through offering short term solutions to the issues raised by the Panel.

2. Membership of the Informal Working Group

Councillors Westrop (Chairman), Collingham, Hipperson, Howland and Kunes were appointed by the Regeneration and Development Panel to serve on the Informal Working Group.

The meetings were also attended by the Portfolio Holder and supported by officers.

Councillor Squire attended some of the meetings under Standing Order 34.

3. Meetings Held

The Informal Working Group met 7 times on the following dates;

14th June 2018
17th July 2018
6th September 2018
18th October 2018
28th November 2018
9th January 2019
13th February 2019

4. Vision of the Informal Working Group

The Informal Working Group endorse the vision and objectives set out in The Sail the Wash initiative and recommend that the Council continue to support and encourage further marine leisure activity of the river and the Wash.

The Informal Working Group considered short term and long term actions to achieve this as set out in the recommendations.

5. Contributions from other organisations

The Informal Working Group invited views from interested organisations. More information on the discussions held is available in the notes from the meetings on Mod Gov. The following individuals attended meetings of the Informal Working Group:

- Peter Harvey, Marine Consultant presented the Group with his report on opportunities to develop marine leisure tourism in the Wash and the Sail the Wash project and the proposed funding application to Round 5 of the Coastal Community Fund.

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- Paul Separovic, Waterways Operations Manager, Environment Agency provided information on previous feasibility studies carried out by the Environment Agency relating to Saddlebow lock and the Denver Visioning Study.
- Robbie Bell and Adrian Tebutt from the Royal Yacht Association (RYA) East provided the Informal Working Group with information on the facilities and activities the Association provided along with information on water sport trends and club memberships.
- Captain Patrick Jary, Harbourmaster attended to provided detail on the impact on the Conservancy Board of any potential extension to the pontoons. The Group noted that the Conservancy Board has a good working relationship with the Council. The Informal Working Group noted that the Conservancy Board supported the extension of the pontoons but acknowledge that contractual discussions are yet to be concluded and there is the potential for this to adversely affect the future viability of the pontoons operation. The Informal Working Group encourage the Council to continue to work with the Conservancy Board to promote the wider benefits of extending the pontoons, whilst recognising the financial pressures on both organisations.
- Bob Panrucker, King's Lynn Coastal Rowing Association provided information on the work of the Association and his future vision for the river.

The Informal Working Group would like to record their thanks to the organisations and individuals who attended meetings for their valuable contributions.

6. Summary of Items discussed by the Informal Working Group

6.1 Sail the Wash Project

As early as the beginning of the last decade, a number of interested agencies including Fenland District Council, Lincolnshire County Council and the Borough Council looked collectively at forming a joint marketing initiative under the banner 'Sail the Wash'.

The concept was seen as, in principle, replicating the highly successful 'Sail Scotland' venture which began in 1994 and which transformed first the west coast of Scotland and subsequently almost all waters north of the border as a credible place to sail and keep a boat. Each location working independently to promote their location for marine leisure is not efficient or effective. Working collectively to promote the Wash as a destination, with a critical mass of destinations to visit (Wells, King's Lynn, Sutton Bridge, Wisbech, Fosdyke, Boston) would encourage 'coastal hopping' which is replicated in other destinations like Scotland and the South Coast.

6.2 Visitor pontoons

The Regeneration and Development Panel agreed, at its meeting on 3rd April, that the pontoons facility/service should be developed and the Informal Working Group have explored ways in which to do this, linking in with the Coastal Communities Fund application.

The Coastal Communities Fund application has been successful at Stage 1 and a Stage 2 application has been made. If this application is successful, funding to develop the facility and promote the 'Sail the Wash' project would become available. The Informal Working Group supports the proposals to develop the pontoons facilities and have made recommendations to the Panel to reflect this.

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To further inform this recommendation and to make note of the facilities that will be needed to optimise this development the Informal Working Group also considered results from the visitor pontoon customer feedback survey.

The Informal Working Group noted that some feedback related to the lack of facilities and availability of information. These were things that would be improved if the Coastal Communities Fund bid was successful. This point was reinforced by those who use the River on a regular basis for sport and leisure activities.

The Informal Working Group discussed a short term, relatively cheap solution for waste disposal for the pontoons. The Group suggested that Baker Lane could be adapted to receive waste. The approximate cost for this would be about £10,000. The Informal Working Group have also asked for discussions to be initiated with the owners of the Sea Cadets building to ascertain if there was the opportunity to open facilities which were already available to users of the Pontoons. Initial discussions are ongoing.

The Informal Working Group also considered the use of floating facilities, similar to those which were provided at Wells and officers conducted some research on this, however this looks to be an expensive option, and some technical issues which would require resolution consequently the Informal Working Group felt that these type of facilities were more suited to a harbour rather than a tidal river. The Informal Working group decided that this would therefore not be put forward as one of their recommendations.

Discussions were held regarding offering up the pontoons for over winter and long term moorings. This could result in additional income if moorings were booked year round, however the Informal Working Group felt that this could be detrimental to visiting and tourist craft which may not be able to be accommodated. The Informal Working Group would therefore not be putting this forward as a recommendation, but note that this could be explored in the future if required. The Conservancy Board have agreed an extension from the seven day time limit for moorings which was currently in place.

The Informal Working Group supported expansion of the Pontoons along the river and the possibility of Pontoons which could accommodate larger boats being installed to hopefully attract more visiting craft. Currently the nearest facility for larger boats is at Wells.

The Informal Working Group also discussed the use of floating Pontoons and suggested that this was something that could be investigated by officers.

6.3 Inland Waterways/Facilities at Saddlebow

Mindful of the wider brief of river use, the Informal Working Group explored the findings of the previous Tail Sluice Feasibility Study and alternative leisure options other than the pontoons for improving river use and it emerged that Saddlebow is one of the few places in the area which could be sailed to all year round and benefited from not being tidal.

The Informal Working Group would therefore like to see the cycle and pedestrian link from Saddlebow to King's Lynn better utilised along with additional moorings installed at Saddlebow (operated by the Environment Agency) to encourage visiting craft from inland waterways. This will actively link that area to the town centre and provide a destination for inland visiting craft.

In summary the Informal Working Group would like to see improvements to the facilities at Saddlebow.

6.4 Denver Visioning Study

The Informal Working Group received information on the Denver Visioning Study which had been commissioned by the Environment Agency. The Informal Working Group note that there could be implications for the river and its flow, along with the potential benefit that this could bring to the area. The Informal Working Group suggests that officers engage with the Environment Agency to see how this can be taken forward.

6.5 Slip way improvements

It was acknowledged that the current slipway to the rear of the Corn Exchange was difficult to access, in poor condition and not in the most desirable location because of its close proximity to residents. In order to increase activity on the river the Informal Working Group discussed how access could be improved or an alternative slipway installed. The Informal Working Group suggested Boal Quay as a location as part of the Nelson Quay redevelopment, or other appropriate locations to be considered as part of any future design work.

6.6 Increasing visiting craft to King's Lynn

This would be achieved if the Coastal Community Fund bid was successful. A marketing plan formed part of the application. What this meant and what should be included in the offer was discussed by the group. Consideration therefore should be given to the offer of activities on the river and the Informal Working Group discussed ideas such as tourist boat trips and equipment hire provision.

The Informal Working Group considered capital and revenue costs of improving facilities to encourage visiting craft to King's Lynn. They believe that there will be indirect benefits relating to overnight person spend which will be of benefit to tourism and the local economy. Data on overnight person spend is included in the CCF Sail the Wash CCF Bid Business Case section 4.5 which is attached as Appendix 1.

6.7 Lift and store facilities

The nearest lift and store facility to King's Lynn was in Wisbech and sometimes engineers had to be brought in from further afield for repairs. The Informal Working Group felt that there could be an interest in lift and store facilities in King's Lynn particularly in view of the declined of activity along the river.

The Informal Working Group noted that currently, if a craft broke down in King's Lynn it would either need to be tugged to Wisbech or removed via the slip way and transported. The Informal Working Group felt that there was limited space to accommodate lift and store facilities, but an option to explore in the future could be that the relevant Portfolio Holder and officers engage in discussions with ABP regarding potential facilities.

7. Conclusion

The river and river frontage would benefit from a comprehensive review and creation of a long term strategy that would deliver positive outcomes for the borough, including an improved leisure offer and increased tourism activity. In the absence of such an overarching strategy, steps to develop various aspects of the river can be undertaken with a view to a more long-term proposition being put in place and the Informal Working Group's recommendation will, it is hoped, facilitate that process.

8. Recommendations put forward by the Informal Working Group

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1. That the Council endorse the vision and objectives set out in The Sail the Wash initiative and that the Council continue to support and encourage further marine leisure activity of the river and the Wash.

In the Long Term:

2. Support consideration to longer term development of marine leisure activity at Boal Quay.

In the Short/Medium Term:

3. Endorse the recommendations set out in the 'Development of Marine Leisure Activity in the Wash' by P D Harvey Consulting, 2018

4. Develop further the facilities at the King's Lynn Visitor Pontoons. The Informal Working Group put forward options for this:

- a. Support the Stage 2 application to the Coastal Community Fund to:
 - extend the existing visitor pontoons to accommodate demand at peak times.
 - install swing moorings to start the provision of permanent mooring facilities in King's Lynn.
 - improve mooring and anchorage in the Wash.
 - develop further the marketing of Sail the Wash.
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- b. Discussions to be held with the owners of the Sea Cadets building regarding potential use of the facilities they had available for toilet and shower facilities. (preferred option).
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5. That the Council acknowledge that the existing slipway is not fit for general marine purposes and give consideration to the installation of a new slipway, or relocation of the existing slipway at Boal Quay or an alternative appropriate location as part of the Nelson Quay redevelopment..

6. Support the Environment Agency to make improvements to the facilities available at Saddlebow including the installation of additional moorings and better utilisation of the existing pedestrian and cycle link between Saddlebow and King's Lynn including marketing and promotion.

7. The relevant Portfolio Holder engage in initial discussions with ABP regarding the potential provision of lift and store facilities in King's Lynn.

8. Officers engage with the Environment Agency to monitor the effect of the Denver Visioning Statement on the development of the river.

9. That if the CCF Bid is unsuccessful the Regeneration and Development Panel give consideration to reconvening the Informal Working Group to explore if there are any alternative options.

9 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report but Cabinet are asked to consider the future funding of the recommended interventions. The outcome of the CCF funding application (expected April 2019) will determine the future of the Sail the Wash initiative.

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The Informal Working Group realise that indirect benefits could be achieved through extensions and improvements, for example benefits relating to visitor spend. Information on the revenue and capital costs of the CCF bid are included in the attached Appendix.

10. Background Papers

Marine Leisure Tourism Study – Sail the Wash

CCF Stage 1 Expression of Interest Form

King's Lynn Visitor Pontoons Customer Survey Feedback Results (2013-2018)

Agendas and Minutes from the Informal Working Group – available on Mod Gov

Tail Sluice Feasibility Study, Royal Haskoning 2009