



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 14th December 2023

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

5th October 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Brookes (in the Chair)
Councillors Henderson, Hudson, Mickleburgh, Morland and Parkinson

Officers in attendance:

- Nick Browning (Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism)
- Dee Hitter (Head of Environmental Sustainability)
- Damien Jaines-White (Assistant Director – Regeneration)
- Simon Jones (Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer)
- Beverly O'Brien (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Sophie Pickerden (Committee Support Officer)
- Joanne Robinson (Assistant Director – Policy, Strategy and Resources)
- Guy Lonsdale (Assistant Director - Finance)
- Richard Dowson (Head of Project Management – Regeneration)
- Helen Thompson (Strategic Lead for Tourism)
- Stephanie Ledgerwood (Head of Professional Services, Equans)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Dawkins (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and the Visitor Economy)

There were four members of the public in attendance.

SPTVE.16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cairns and Councillor Westcott for this meeting.

SPTVE.17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Morland declared an other registerable interest in SPTVE.25 as he was a member of the Civic Society.

SPTVE.18 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 27th July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

SPTVE.19 QUESTION TIME

The Panel welcomed Mr Wright to ask his question to the panel.

“When Cleethorpes hosted last month’s ‘Declaration’ of the Coronation Coast National Nature Reserve, North East Lincolnshire Council Leader Councillor Philip Jackson said: ‘Our coastline is an internationally important landscape for wildlife - the new reserve provides an excellent opportunity to attract more visitors throughout the year.’ Are there any specific ways in which the scrutiny panel or the wider Council can facilitate investment in all-year round ‘eco-tourism’ to encourage birdwatchers and other wildlife-enthusiasts to enjoy what is on offer within the borough? For instance, would the authority be open to hosting (and co-operating) on a future series of BBC TV’s SpringWatch?”

A member suggested that Ms Thompson liaise with Mr Wright in order to look at what the possibilities were in regard to eco-tourism in the area. There was a wider discussion about ‘eco-tourism’ and a member suggested that the Council involve the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

In response to Mr Wright’s question, Ms Hitter said that sustainable tourism was something that the local authority was very keen to support, encouraging people to come and enjoy what North East Lincolnshire had to offer. She said that it was imperative, however, that our efforts to attract tourism were balanced with the need to respect the biological diversity and protected designations of the Humber Estuary. Ms Hitter said that she was currently working with colleagues across the organisation and our partner agencies to explore opportunities to increase and enhance what we have, find effective ways in which to increase people’s knowledge and understanding of the importance of the Humber Estuary for wildlife and, crucially, promoting it in a way in which we can encourage people to enjoy what we have responsibly.

Ms Hitter responded to Mr Wright’s second point by stating that in relation to BBC TV’s Springwatch, this was something that had been explored and providing the Council had the necessary support from our partners, was it something we would be happy to consider should the Humber Estuary be considered a suitable filming location.

The Chair asked that the panel be updated on any progress.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Strategic Lead for Tourism liaise with Mr Wright regarding eco-tourism in the area.
2. That the panel be updated on any progress.

SPTVE.20 FORWARD PLAN

The panel considered the current Forward Plan and were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure. No such items were identified.

RESOLVED - That the Forward Plan be noted.

SPTVE.21 QUARTER 1 – COUNCIL PLAN RESOURCES AND FINANCE REPORT

The panel received a report from the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing key information and analysis of the Council's position and performance April– Jun 2023. The panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters.

One member said that they thought the dashboard was fantastic but would like to see any potential risk included as well as information on the impact the tourism industry was having on the local area. He commented that this would improve the panel's ability to directly scrutinise tourism in the local area. Ms Robinson stated that the dashboard was still under development, but they were looking to include targets and trends and that panel members would see those in the upcoming reports. Ms Robinson said that potential risks were difficult to include within the dashboard but could be included within the information section online. Mr Browning said that the footfall statistics were one of the ways of showing the impact that tourism had on the local area. Mr Browning referred panel members to the 13.7% increase in footfall that had been experienced in the area when events were taking place. The panel requested that, where possible, more information like that be included in the report.

A member queried whether third party event organisers were able to promote their events at Lincs Inspire venues. Mr Browning said that he would enquire with Lincs Inspire to see if that was correct and report back to the panel.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.

2. That the Head of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Tourism inform the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel on whether Lincs Inspire were allowing third party events to be promoted within their settings.

SPTVE.22 CLEETHORPES LEVELLING UP FUNDING – SEA ROAD BUILDING

The panel received a briefing note from the Assistant Director of Regeneration on the Sea Road Building.

Ms O'Brien read out a statement that had been submitted by Ms Macdonald, the joint owner of a business in the vicinity of the development.

Ms Macdonald raised concerns about the potential adverse effect of the development on existing local businesses and feared that a fast-food chain would be allowed to operate in the location, which she felt would change the whole feel of the resort. She noted that we were now living in very different times to those when planning permission was granted in 2019, with the decline of retail space. She referred to the inspiring development survey responses and hoped that they would be listened to.

Whilst she was initially concerned about the kind of businesses that were proposed to be operating from the second and third floors of this property, having looked at the most recent artists impressions, she was even more concerned about what was intended for the ground floor. She noted that the planning permission granted in 2019 had a condition that the ground floor would be restricted to public toilets, Beach Safety, Tourist Information and a kiosk. The latest proposal appeared to be for a commercial space with outside seating area, probably providing alcohol and therefore all associated anti-social behaviour, with the toilets around the corner, up the hill and past all of the outside tables. She felt that this was the wrong location as these facilities needed to be visible, easily accessible from the beach and with the entrance where the zebra crossing crossed Central Promenade opposite the Pier. She highlighted previous concerns that had been raised about people having to cross four lanes of traffic and the need for a traffic island at the very least.

When the new road layout was first shown to us, (local businesses), we pointed out that there was no way for people to cross over four lanes of traffic and we asked for an island similar to the one at the top of Sea Road. We were told that people would cross the zebra crossing near Beach Safety, walk along the road past the slipway and then cross another zebra crossing to get back to the other side of the road. I can assure you that this does not happen! It is incredibly dangerous now, people cross over the whole length of the road, some even use the roundabout itself as an island. Can you please listen to us this time!

Ms Macdonald believed that the best way for Cleethorpes to attract more visitors was by being ahead of other resorts and providing outstanding facilities right at our heart, not a generic bar or restaurant or shopping

area that you find in all towns. She felt that this would set us apart and make us the destination of choice.

The Chair sought reassurance that Ms Macdonald would receive a written response to her statement from officers. Ms O'Brien confirmed that Ms Macdonald would receive a written response.

Mr Jaines-White responded that in terms of the use of the building, the Council would be targeting occupiers that were family friendly businesses. He said that the council was not targeting businesses that solely sold alcohol. Mr Jaines-White said that discussions had taken place with potential occupiers and that there was interest on the market for what the building would offer. Mr Jaines-White suggested that a member of the Highways Team be invited to a future meeting to discuss any highways concerns.

There was a wider discussion on the importance of listening to the concerns of local businesses and potential highways safety issues. A member stated that they had concerns about road safety in the specific area and would personally raise the issue with the Planning and Highways Departments.

The panel were shown an interactive presentation which showed how the building would look when complete. The panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters.

A member raised concerns about the width of the pedestrian area near the bus stops. Ms Ledgerwood stated that the issue would be addressed.

A member expressed concern with the locality of the toilets and changing facilities and said it could pose a safety concern. Mr Jaines-White said that he was not sure that the locality of those facilities would be a safety concern and he explained to panel members that, if the changing facilities and toilets were located in different parts of the building, there would be a cost involved as more infrastructure would be needed. Mr Jaines-White said that he would update the panel on the distance of the facilities from Cleethorpes Beach but he did not think it was unreasonably far.

A member asked whether the Tourist Information Centre would be located within the building. Mr Jaines-White responded that commercial operators would be preferred as the primary objective was for the building to be operated by third party businesses. The panel expressed concern that there was not a proper Tourist Information Centre in the area. The portfolio holder said that one of his main objectives was to see a Tourist Information Centre reinstated. The Chair asked the portfolio holder to report back to the panel any updates regarding the Tourist Information Centre.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Ms Macdonald receive a written response from Democratic Services on the discussion had on this topic.

SPTVE.23 TOURISM DASHBOARD

The panel received a report from the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure on the Tourism Dashboard. Ms Thompspon said that the report contained information from the 2022 Scarborough Tourism Economic Assessment Monitor (STEAM) report.

A panel member asked a question regarding the impact of tourism on the local area, how we were finding out what was driving traffic/people to the area and whether we were benchmarking our data against other areas. Ms Thompson responded that in terms of benchmarking, she did work closely with other tourism officers across Greater Lincolnshire to assess our figures against theirs. Ms Thompson said that the Resort Team actively asked visitors to complete surveys in order to gain a further understanding about what attracted visitors to the local area. Ms Thompson explained that the Tourism team was looking into alternative ways of capturing data, for example, an online survey on the Discover North East Lincolnshire website, and possibly a new reporting method to capture mobile data, as part of the Levelling Up projects.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTVE.24 CLEE FIELDS

The panel received a report from the Assistant Director Regeneration on the operation arrangements for the development at Clee Fields. Mr Browning stated that the two new pitches were under construction and he was hoping that the works would be completed in February 2024, with opening from March – April 2024.

The panel commended officers and all those involved on the project.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPTVE.25 GRIMSBY LIBRARY

The panel received a briefing note regarding works to and alternative arrangements for the Grimsby Library. The panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters.

Several members expressed concern about the potential temporary closure of Grimsby Library and the impact that would have on residents

and those who rely on the facilities the library offered. Mr Jaines-White said that he understood the concerns raised and said that no decision had been made. He said that a temporary closure was needed during the refurbishment project, but he would look at the prospect of a temporary alternative provision. Another councillor queried whether an update on the project would be included on the agenda at a future meeting. Mr Dowson confirmed that a report would be coming before the panel at the next scheduled panel meeting.

Members then had a wider discussion on the need for a strategy regarding the libraries in the local area. Mr Jaines-White said that the specific funding being used was time limited and that the works that would be done using that funding would deal with all the necessary statutory obligations within the building. He said that it was prudent to go ahead with the works now whilst there was funding in place to avoid any cost to the council in the future. Mr Browning said that a strategy regarding the libraries was being developed and that any potential changes would be subject to public consultation. The Chair stated that a report would be included on the next agenda outlining the process to the panel.

RESOLVED – That the briefing note be noted.

SPTVE.26 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive tracking the recommendations of the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel. Ms O'Brien confirmed that the Physical Sports Strategy update would be on the agenda for the meeting of this panel in January 2024 and that the Habitat Management Plan would remain on the tracking report.

There was a discussion around panel members visiting Lincs Inspire venues to look at the facilities and engage with members of the public. Mr Jaines-White said that he would inform Lincs Inspire of these upcoming visits over the next few months and report back to panel members once this had been agreed.

RESOLVED – That the tracking recommendations SPTVE.6, SPTVE.10 and SPTVE.11 be removed from the tracking report and all remaining items be noted.

SPTVE.27 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Portfolio Holder received a question from Councillor Henderson.

“Over the last twelve months several commemorative plaques have been removed from sites in Cleethorpes and Grimsby. Removing the plaques is quite a difficult job, as they are securely fixed using specialist equipment, and they are of little material value. Therefore, it is unlikely to be the work of a speculative criminal. The plaques clearly have huge value to the Borough and the cost of replacing them is not trivial. I have received a

request from Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society to investigate what has happened. So far enquiries to North East Lincolnshire Council and the police have drawn a blank, save for an unsubstantiated theory that the council ordered the work to be undertaken. Please can you confirm that the removal of the plaques has nothing to do with council.”

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Council had not removed any of the plaques in question. He stated that the issue had been reported by the Civic Society and that council officers had also made enquiries to the necessary authorities to get this resolved.

SPTVE.28 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call-in decisions taken at recent meetings of Cabinet.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 11.43am