

REPORT TO: CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND TOURISM
CABINET

DATE: 6TH JANUARY 2010
14TH JANUARY 2010

SUBJECT: CROSBY COASTAL PARK; DRAFT MASTER PLAN AND PHASE 1
WORK

WARDS AFFECTED: CHURCH, BLUNDELLSANDS, MANOR

REPORT OF: GRAHAM BAYLISS
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND TOURISM

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**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:** NO

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet Member on progress with the Master Plan for Crosby Coastal Park, and to seek approval for the Phase 1 works.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

Cabinet Member's approval is required to enable progress of the master plan and procurement of the proposed Phase 1 works.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism:

- i.) Notes the work done to date, and approves the first draft master plan.
- ii.) Authorises the Leisure Director to seek competitive tenders for the Phase 1 landscape works
- iii.) Notes that the Leisure Director will accept the lowest tenders for the works in accordance with delegated powers identified in the Council's Constitution
- iv.) Requests Cabinet to include the additional sum of £26,879 (from Section 106 deposits) for Crosby Coastal Park in the Department's Capital Programme.

Cabinet:

- i) Approves that the increase to the scheme of £26,879 be included in the capital programme, to be funded from Section 106 deposits, bringing the total scheme costs of the Phase 1 works for Crosby Coastal Park to £226,879

KEY DECISION: Yes

FORWARD PLAN: Yes.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Member meeting.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

Not drawing up a master plan would mean that any future developments may be unco-ordinated and may result in poor value for money. Not spending the capital allocation would mean that the area around the new facilities such as the CLAC and the new Play Area are poor quality and reflect badly on the Council.

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework: None.

Financial: £200,000 in Capital Programme for 2009/10. 26,879 from Section 106.

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2008/ 2009 £	2009/ 2010 £	2010/ 2011 £	2011/ 2012 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure		26,879		
Funded by:		26,879		
Section 106				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE</u>				
<u>IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N				
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: There are no legal implications directly associated with this report.

Risk Assessment: Not appropriate.

Asset Management: Not appropriate.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS

The Finance and Information Services Director has been consulted and his comments are included in the report FD269.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	✓		
2	Creating Safe Communities	✓		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	✓		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	✓		
5	Environmental Sustainability	✓		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	✓		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	✓		
8	Children and Young People	✓		

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Report to Cabinet dated 27th January 2007; "Crosby Coastal park Improvements"

1. Background

- 1.1 Cabinet, in January 2007, recommended that the master plan for Crosby Coastal Park be updated and a phased costed development programme be produced.
- 1.2 Crosby Coastal Park is defined as the coastal open space between Seaforth Docks in the south and Hightown in the north. It includes the Seafront Gardens and Potters Barn in Waterloo, and the Promenade, dunes and the beach which run along its western boundary. A Location Plan of the area is shown in Annexe A.
- 1.3 A number of key projects have been developed in the area over recent years, which have increased the status of the coastal park, and attracted an increasing number of local users, and visitors from further afield. These projects include Crosby Leisure Centre, 'Another Place' sculptures, the new Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre, on-going improvements to the Marine Lake and the surrounding footpaths and landscape infrastructure, and the proposed 'Big Lottery Fund' Play Area to be constructed by summer 2010.
- 1.4 It is therefore important to consider the wider context of the coastal park, how the different centres of activity link together, and how the park may be developed in the future to maximise its potential as a strategically important recreational facility for local communities and a significant tourist attraction for Sefton.
- 1.5 The best way of achieving this is to draw up a master plan for the medium and long- term development of the area.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 Extensive consultation has been carried out over the past few months with various groups of people, including:
 - Ward members
 - Council officers
 - Local community groups
 - Wider public.
- 2.2 The consultation indicates that there is strong support for a master plan for the area, and demand for improvement works to start on site as soon as possible, to maximise the potential of the new facilities, such as the new Lakeside centre and the BLF Play Area.
- 2.3 A report on progress to date, and the Draft Master Plan will also be taken to Crosby Area Committee, and any significant issues raised at the meeting will be reported back to Cabinet Member.

3.0 Initial Report of Issues

3.1 An 'Initial Report of Issues' has been produced, incorporating the findings of the consultation exercises. This report discusses the key areas which need to be addressed by the master plan. These are summarised under the following headings:

- Identity and Character
- Access and Circulation
- Linkages and Facilities
- Activities
- Heritage
- Habitats and Wildlife
- Coastal Protection
- People management
- Park management and maintenance

3.2 The initial report is included in Annexe B.

4.0 Draft Master Plan

4.1 The initial findings have been developed into a 'first draft' master plan. A previous plan, which was drawn up 4 years ago has also been considered in the design.

4.2 The first draft master plan will be available to view at the Cabinet Member meeting.

4.3 The plan aims to address the issues raised to date and set a direction for the long-term development of the park. It will be used as a reference point for the design of any projects in the park in the future. It will also be used as a basis for attracting external funding for individual schemes within the overall master plan, by showing that the development of the area has been considered in context with the wider environment.

4.4 Subject to approval of this first draft by Cabinet Member (Leisure and Tourism), further consultation and design work will be carried out on the master plan to produce a definitive version. The Master Plan will be then be presented to Cabinet Member (Leisure and Tourism) for final approval.

5.0 Delivery

5.1 Following its formal adoption, funding will be sought to implement the master plan in phases. Due to the scale of the work, it is likely to take several years to achieve the desired results. However, having an overall strategic direction for the park will enable funding packages to be assembled for discrete areas of work, and also enable the Council to be ready to take up any opportunistic funding that may be available.

- 5.2 Although the master plan which has been produced is a realistic document, and does not include any extravagant or unachievable proposals, the full master plan will take several millions of pounds to realise it, over a number of years (due to the scale of the site). It will therefore be necessary to prioritise work according to what is most urgent and what funding is available.
- 5.3 A programme of higher priority works has been identified to commence implementation of the master plan. These works concentrate on improving the most heavily used area of the park, between the ends of South Road and Cambridge Road, including the area around the proposed new play area and Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre.
- 5.4 The programme of works include:
- Improvements to the key 'gateway' entrances to the park at South Road, Cambridge Road and Great Georges Road.
 - Improvements to the access road from Cambridge Road.
 - A new viewing platform at a key location to the end of the South Road footpath
 - New footpaths to link key features in this area
 - Repairs to the lake edge in this area
 - Interpretation and signage in the park
 - Pilot project to establish dune vegetation along Promenade towards Burbo Bank
- 5.5 £200,000 is available for the above works from Leisure Services' Capital Programme. This funding is programmed for expenditure in 2009/10. There is also £26,879 available from Section 106 funding for recreational open space improvements in Crosby Coastal Park, which is also to be allocated to the Phase 1 works for 2010/11.
- 5.6 The works will be tendered to appropriate contractors taken from the Select List for Landscape Construction Works and will be accepted via delegated powers.
- 5.7 The draft programme for the Phase 1 works is
- Tender acceptance: January 2010
 - Start on site: January 2010
 - Phase 1 works complete: March 2010

ANNEXE B:

INITIAL REPORT OF ISSUES:

This report summarises the main issues which have arisen through the research, consultation and early feasibility work to date. This information has been used to feed into the master planning process, and the production of the First Draft Master Plan.

This document will form the basis of a more comprehensive Report of Issues which will be worked up along with the draft master plan to produce a final version.

Identity and Character

Current Situation and Issues

The Coastal Park is given a strong character by its proximity to the coast, and the typical regional maritime landscape of beach, sand-dunes, and grassland. This character should be preserved.

The character is important as it gives the park a strong identity, which helps to promote the area and make it distinct from other urban parks and recreational areas. It also creates a sense of unity from one end to the other.

Many of the recent additions to the park have been sympathetic with the character of the area. For example, the new Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre fits in well with the coastal theme, with its use of timber cladding, jetties and boardwalks, stone gabions and a wildflower meadow on its roof-garden.

Draft Proposals

All new work within the coastal park should be designed with the local character in mind, both on the macro scale (e.g. when improving large open spaces or buildings) and on the micro scale (e.g. when selecting materials, furniture and signage).

A palette of suitable materials should be developed which can be used throughout the park whenever new work is being carried out. Improvements to entrances along the length of the Coastal Park, for example, if following a standard design and using similar materials, will help to improve the common identity of the park, as will selection of appropriate furniture, surfacing, signage, planting, etc.

Access and Circulation

Current Situation and Issues

There are already a number of key access points along the length of the park, linking different communities with the open space. This helps to promote the use of the whole area, and gives community 'ownership' to certain sections of it. Links are also good with public transport, particularly the train stations at Waterloo, Hall Rd East and Hightown. Links with the wider cycle path network are also strong.

Although the number of access points is probably sufficient, the quality of these entrances is variable and generally poor. There is little to welcome visitors to any of the main access points, and some of the key approaches to the park (along Cambridge Road and South Road) are particularly uninviting.

Circulation through the site is generally stronger in an east-west direction (linking access points with the Promenade) than in a north-south direction. The strong north-south route is the Promenade, which continues along a partly tarmac track to Hightown. However, there is no 'return' route leading through the park, and visitors usually have to use the same route in both directions.

Consultation has also indicated the demand for a better continuous path around the Marine Lake. This circular route is currently interrupted around the locality of the play area and CLAC, meaning that people have to walk on the grass or along the access road in order to do a complete circuit.

One of the key issues with circulation is the lack of access from the Seafront Gardens to the remainder of the Coastal Park. A high brick wall at the interface between the two means that there is no connectivity, and this results in the Seafront Gardens being less well used, and therefore subject to anti-social behaviour and abuse.

Draft Proposals

All entrances to the park should be upgraded using a common approach, depending on whether they are primary access points (i.e. an entrance which will be regularly used by thousands of visitors) or secondary ones (i.e. those used mainly by smaller numbers of mainly local communities). This will help to create a better sense of unity throughout the area, and will improve the important first impressions of the park. This in turn should lead to greater use, better surveillance and a decrease in anti-social behaviour. Entrance improvements could include signage, lighting, furniture gateway features etc.

To improve circulation in the park, an alternative route which goes in a north-south direction through the grassed area from Burbo Bank to the Marine Lake would provide a greater series of options for walkers and cyclists, as well as the possibility of escaping from the extremes of wind and sand blow at certain times. It would also encourage the increased use of the park for running, cycling etc. Improved circulation around the Marine Lake will also assist in better use of the park for informal recreation.

Access between the Seafront Gardens and the wider Coastal Park could effectively be enabled by creating openings in the walls, and constructing new footpaths to link in with the existing footpath system. These openings could be gated in the same way that all the other entrances to these parks are. This improved circulation would help to increase the foot traffic through the Gardens, increase the natural surveillance and eliminate some of the hidden spots within them. The existing shelters in some of the gardens would be a good point to create these links, and they would effectively become an entrance feature for the Gardens.

Facilities and Linkages

Current Situation and Issues

There are a significant number of important leisure facilities of local and regional importance in the park. These include Crosby Beach, Crosby Leisure Centre, 'Another Place' sculptures, the new Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre, Crosby Marine Lake, the Seafront Gardens and Potters Barn, the proposed 'Big Lottery Fund' Play Area to be constructed by summer 2010, and sites of nature interest, particularly towards Seaforth and Hightown.

The provision of toilets and refreshments are always considered of major importance by park users in large recreational areas such as these, and the consultation has raised these as key issues. There are a number of toilets available for public use in the park, at the CLAC, Crosby Leisure Centre, and at Burbo Bank. Similarly there are refreshments currently available at the South Road entrance, CLAC, Crosby Leisure Centre, and (via a mobile franchise operation) at Burbo Bank. In addition, there are toilets off-site opposite Waterloo Station and numerous cafes along South Road.

There are a number of car parks available for visitors to the site, specifically near the Cambridge Road entrance, around the CLAC, at the end of the access road, Blucher Street, Crosby Leisure Centre and Burbo Bank. There is also a certain amount of on-road parking along the length of the park. Provision of car parking is an issue, however, particularly to the south of the park, around the more active areas. A major influx of visitors in the summer, using the facilities in the park and accessing the beach, places a very heavy demand on the existing car parking areas. This intensity of use at peak times is likely to increase as the number and quality of attractions increases.

Proposals

The main centres of activity need better linkages, to promote better access between them for pedestrians, cyclists etc. Physical improvements such as paths and cycle routes are one obvious way to achieve this, but signage within the site and from the

main approaches is also important. Marketing and promotion also needs to address the 'whole package' which is on offer.

The former toilet block at the South Road entrance is no longer in use, and given the new facilities at Waterloo Station and the CLAC, it would not be economically feasible to re-open these. A future use for the building as some type of community facility, such as a storage area / base for volunteer gardeners should be considered.

There have also been requests for further toilet facilities, especially along the Promenade between Seaforth and Blundellsands. However, the capital costs of building facilities here would be considerable, particularly due to the distance of the nearest utilities (water and sewage). Maintenance costs would also be high, and the remote nature of these locations would make them susceptible to abuse. The Council is therefore unlikely to fund provision or maintenance of further toilets.

There has been a long-standing demand for improved refreshment facilities near to the car park at Burbo Bank. The popularity of this car park suggests that such a facility could be sustained and would be of a strong benefit to the park.

The provision of new car parking areas to cater for the current and potentially increased demand will have to be balanced against their high cost and aesthetic and environmental considerations, and the fact that for a large proportion of the time, many of the parking spaces will be empty due to the seasonal nature of the park use.

One solution may be to provide 'overspill' car parking with a reinforced turf or 'grasscrete' surfacing, which could be used at peak times, but would help to preserve the green nature of the park.

The car park near to the South Road entrance / Marine Gardens has been raised a number of times in the consultation, mainly with regards to its restricting access and circulation around this area, and the visual issues around having a car park in this prominent location. Again, future relocation of this parking facility could be carried out, but would have to be balanced against cost and the priority in the overall scheme of works to be carried out on a limited budget.

Signage and furniture are also generally considered of high importance, particularly by local residents, and improvements to facilities such as these, while not appearing to be of strategic importance, will have a marked effect on people's enjoyment of the park.

Activities

Current Situation and Issues

There are a number of established activities associated with the park. These include:

- Informal recreation, such as walking, cycling, jogging, ball games, beach activities, dog walking, picnics, kite flying, play, wildlife watching,

- Formal recreation, mostly associated with the Marina, and including canoeing, sailing and other water-sports.

Proposals

There is potential for an increased diversity of activities in the park. The opening of the new CLAC offers up potential for further activities to be run from this building, using the park as well as the Marina, and offering a wider range of pursuits for disabled visitors.

The new 'BLF' funded play area project will include a temporary play worker post, and this person will engage children and young people in outdoor play throughout the park, maximising the potential of the wider coastal environment and not just the built play facilities.

Heritage

Current Situation and Issues

The historically most important areas within the Coastal Park are the Seafront Gardens and Potters Barn. These gardens have an interesting design and are of great interest to the local community, who wish to see them improved or restored. The large areas concerned mean that costs for improvement works are very high. Some works have taken place to manage and improve the vegetation over the last few years using a planned approach and funded by small amounts of revenue budgets when available. Significant amounts of funding, however, will be needed to carry out restoration works on the railings and footpaths of the Seafront Gardens, and the building in Potters Barn.

Potters Barn Park is currently owned by Peel Holdings, as part of their land holding around Seaforth Docks. The land and building is leased to Sefton Council, but the terms of the existing lease are not sufficiently secure for the Council to apply for external funding to carry out restoration or improvement works. Dialogue is on-going with Peel Holdings to enable a new lease to be secured, but negotiations have not been successful to date.

Proposals

The existing planned refurbishment of the Seafront Gardens should continue, subject to availability of resources. The community involvement in this scheme has been very beneficial in improving these areas, and additional funding should be sought from appropriate sources in partnership with the 'Friends of Seafront Gardens'. As discussed previously, improved connections between the Gardens and the wider Coastal Park should be created to improve circulation and natural surveillance within these areas.

The dialogue with Peel Holdings should be continued to try and resolve the leasing issues at Potters Barn Park, and, subject to a satisfactory agreement, Potters Barn and the surrounding park can be used more effectively as a gateway to the Coastal Park, and a site of important local heritage.

Habitats and Wildlife

The coastal park, including the foreshore, extending from the Freeport to the River Alt, is afforded numerous nature conservation designations. The shore and most of the Hightown Dunes and Meadows are a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation. The foreshore is also a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site in respect of wetlands and migratory birds. The whole of the site is a Site of Local Biological Interest in the UDP.

Coastal Protection

The Shoreline Management Plan and Coastal Defence Strategy take into account the issues relating to the management and maintenance of the promenade and sand dunes as important coastal protection features. Although the strategy identifies the long-term plans for maintaining the defences in the short-term there are proposals to lower and fix parts of the sand dunes above the promenade and transfer sand to Hightown to strengthen the frontal dunes. This work will contribute to the objectives of the master plan.

Park management and maintenance

Current Situation and Issues

The Seafront Gardens and Potters Barn Park are maintained by the Landscape Development and Management Section of Leisure Services, along with the other formal parks in Sefton.

Recent consultation has indicated that the issues of most concern to local residents in the management of these gardens are:

- Litter
- Rodents
- Neglected areas
- Anti-social behaviour
- Dog-fouling
- Lack of toilets
- Lack of park keeper
- Lack of sports facilities

Proposals

Due to the age of the Seafront Gardens, they are now in a condition where they need considerable investment to resolve such issues as poor and time-worn

infrastructure. Some changes of maintenance of the planting and lawned areas are also required, particularly to the recently improved areas of shrub planting.

The local community is pro-actively involved in the maintenance and care of the Seafront Gardens, and their input is a very positive step forward for the future of the Gardens.