

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**Tuesday, 16 March 2021**

REPORT TITLE:	HOYLAKE BEACH WORKING GROUP - FINAL REPORT
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides Members of the committee with an update on one of the recommendations from the meeting of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee of 3rd December 2020 to:

- Produce a Communications Strategy for the development of the beach management plan for Hoylake in consultation with a politically proportionate working group.

Members of the working group attended a meeting on the 22 February 2021 to discuss and make recommendations on communications strategy for the development of the beach management plan for Hoylake. This report is a summary of this meeting.

The future management of Hoylake beach strategically aligns with both the Sustainable Environment and Safe and Pleasant Communities themes of the Wirral Plan 2025.

This report affects Hoylake & Meols ward.

It is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee are recommended to:

- Note the report and its contents,
- Agree the recommendations contained within Hoylake Beach Working group final report which is attached to this report as appendix 1

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1** The recommendation from Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Working Group on 3 December 2020 required that a Communications and Engagement Strategy be produced in consultation with a politically proportionate Working Group. The Working Group met on 22 February 2021 and the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy are presented within a separate report 'Hoylake Beach Management' for Committee approval.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1** The draft Communications and Engagement Strategy has been developed in consultation with the Working Group. The Working Group considered options regarding the stages and timings at which consultation with the public should take place. The majority consensus of the working group was that a project site be established to facilitate engagement with the public whilst the Ecology and Geomorphology Study (EGS) is undertaken. Once the Study is complete and its findings published on the project site public consultation can take place.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1** Assent from Natural England for all beach management activities expires on 31st March 2021. In order to determine appropriate future beach management options for Hoylake an improved understanding of the ecology of the area combined with a study which considers how Hoylake beach has changed and is likely to change under a range of climate change scenarios is required.
- 3.2** There is significant public interest in the management of Hoylake beach. Engagement with the public and consultation on options to manage Hoylake beach are required. A Communications and Engagement Strategy is required to effectively manage the engagement and consultation process.
- 3.3** A politically proportionate Working Group was been established to assist in the production of a Communication and Engagement Strategy. The Working Group met on 22nd February 2021 and agreed that an effective Strategy requires the establishment of:
- Project Site to allow for dissemination of information available to date such as Natural England's Discretionary Advice, flood risk data and sea level rise predictions and also in future (EGS), timelines for each stage of the development of the Hoylake Beach Management Plan and engagement and future consultation on development of the options for the Hoylake Beach Management Plan.
 - Steering Group of officers to ensure service objectives are fully considered during the development of the Hoylake Beach Management Plan.

- 3.4 The Working Group considered whether an initial phase of consultation could be undertaken during the production of the EGS, however the majority consensus concluded that the evidence base of the EGS, along with the regulatory requirements set out in Natural England's Discretionary Advice should help manage expectations of future management of Hoylake Beach and that consultation should not be undertaken until after delivery of the EGS. There was also majority consensus that the Project Site should be established in order to start engagement with the public during the production of the EGS with the site being used to inform, map out timescales and receive comments.
- 3.5 The working group agreed that the Project Site should allow full access to all scientific and evidential data and that non-technical summaries also be made available. The brief and specification for the EGS requires the production of a non-technical executive summary.
- 3.6 Some Councillors on the Working Group believed that residents and those living closest to the beach should have a greater say than those living in other parts of Hoylake and elsewhere.
- 3.7 The draft Communications and Engagement Strategy identifies an 18 month period from the completion of the EGS in October 2021 for the implementation of a Hoylake Beach Management Plan based on:
- Initial consultation
 - Definition of Objectives
 - Short Listing of Options
 - Consultation on Options
 - Approval of Preferred Option
 - Habitat Regulation Assessment screening
 - Application for assent to Natural England

This would result in the implementation of a Hoylake Beach Management Plan from April 2023.

- 3.8 The draft Communications and Engagement Strategy at Appendix B of the 'Hoylake beach management update' has been produced to reflect the majority consensus of the Working Group.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is a summary of the finding of the working group which met on 22nd February 2021 and there are no direct legal implications.

5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 5.1 This report is a summary of the findings of the working group and as such there are no direct resource implications. However, the delivery of the Communications and Engagement Strategy, including establishing the Project Site can be undertaken by utilising existing staff and resources within the Parks and Environment service area with support from the wider Neighbourhoods Directorate and other Council resources.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 6.1 Hoylake beach management has recently been subject to press and social media attention. Without an approved Communications and Engagement Strategy there is a risk that the decision-making process for any future beach management will not be seen to have been made based on scientific evidence and the views of all stakeholders. By approving the production of a Communication and Engagement Strategy, a clear strategy for a transparent and open process can be determined.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This report recommends committee note the comments of the Hoylake beach working group and supports the separate 'Hoylake Beach Management report' which asks Committee to approve the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy which sets out the timescales, objectives and methods for undertaking engagement and consultation.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. This report is for information to Members and as such, does not require in EIA.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report is for information purposes and as such, there are no direct environment and climate change implications. However, the recommendations contained within the report aim to contribute towards a robust engagement and consultation of potential beach management options.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Final Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Habitats Regulations Screening Assessment & Application for SSSI Assent Relating to Beach Management Operations at Wirral Beaches – AECOM March 2016

UK Climate Projections User Interface. (2019). Retrieved from
<https://ukclimateprojectionsui.metoffice.gov.uk/products>

Natural England advice to Wirral Council regarding beach management – Natural England March 2020

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee	03 December 2020
Special Meeting - Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Call-in Hoylake Beach Management	21 August 2020
Executive Member Decision Hoylake Beach Management	13 March 2020