

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE ON 8 JUNE 2021

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: BOGNOR REGIS SEAFRONT: REVIEW OF SEAFRONT DELIVERY PLAN AND DELIVERABLE INTERVENTIONS AND ACTIONS

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DATE: April 2021

EXTN: 37846

AREA: Economy Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Report provides a progress update on proposed projects in respect of the regeneration of Bognor Regis seafront.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are requested to indicate if there are any projects listed in this report that should not be included in the list of priority projects being considered in a separate report to the Economy Committee in July 2021.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1. INTRODUCTION

[Cabinet on 16 November 2020](#), in response to the Covid Recovery Members Working Party authorised “To note the report and instruct Officers to proceed with each proposal listed in Appendix A” which requested officers undertake “Reviews take place on the previous strategies for the two seafronts” and “Re-examine the 2016 Bognor Regis Seafront Delivery Plan and prioritise a series of deliverable interventions and actions”

The report provides:

- an update on regeneration strategy and plans in respect of Bognor Regis seafront
- delivery to date in line with these plans and
- lists future deliverable interventions and projects.

1.2. STRATEGY, POLICY, PLANS, DECISIONS

- 1.2.1. In 2010, the Council approved the [Bognor Regis Seafront Strategy](#) which set out an overall vision for the improvement of the seafront. The Strategy proposed to improve both the quality of the offer available on the seafront and the built environment. This desire for such improvement is echoed in both the [Bognor Regis Masterplan](#) and the [Bognor Regis Neighbourhood Plan](#).
- 1.2.2. The 2016 [Bognor Regis Seafront Delivery Plan](#) was drawn up from existing strategy, policy and consultation results. It expands on the detail of the Seafront Strategy and specifies what can be delivered and where along the promenade. It also seeks to maximise the income generation opportunities for the Council from the various commercial outlets. The Delivery Plan set out various thematic zones along the seafront between the pier and Butlin's. It was recommended for approval by Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub Committee in June 2016 and approved by Full Council in July 2016.
- 1.2.3. In 2018 further strategic work was undertaken around potential development on the seafront.
- 1.2.4 A "[Style Guide](#)" was created for the seafront to ensure that future permanent new buildings on the seafront, whether built by the Council or by others, benefit from good quality design in a modern and timeless style that is in keeping with the existing and planned architectural context, and that all future buildings gel together as a holistic and complementary suite of buildings.
- 1.2.5. The "Stalls Zone" is the thematic zone located around the widest part of the promenade near Clarence Road. This is the only place on the narrow promenade where there is room for a cluster of commercial outlets, so this is a key area in terms of improving the commercial offer on the seafront, and also for income generation for the Council. The layout of permanent and temporary buildings and commercial pitches within this area has to safely accommodate all of the "traffic" on the promenade. It was proposed that each building or seasonal kiosk will have an allocation of outdoor space, and temporary pitches will ultimately have services available via a separately metred hatch cover within that allocated space.
- 1.2.6. The Stalls Zone area is also home to the Grade II listed Bandstand. The proposal from 2016 to relocate the bandstand was rejected by Members. Despite its limited use for concerts, the bandstand together with the pier and seafront parks forms a key part of the traditional seaside character which draws visitors and families to the town and beach. The impact of the proposed Stalls Zone layout plan on the listed bandstand was assessed by the Council's Principal Conservation Officer to ensure that the setting of the listed asset is not compromised. Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub Committee in June 2018 resolved ' That the grant application for up to £50,000 funding from the Coastal Revival Fund be supported for the improvement of the bandstand'. A grant application to the Coastal Revival Fund for £50,000 towards the heritage reinstatement and full renovation for the Bandstand was successful.

- 1.2.7. Delivery was proposed for a Council-funded permanent catering unit to be built east of the bandstand that could potentially use the bandstand as a café seating area subject to planning permission.
- 1.2.8. These initiatives were recommended for approval by Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub Committee in June 2018 and approved by Full Council in July 2018.
- 1.2.9. There are also deliverable interventions and activities on adjacent and associated sites.
- 1.2.10. The strategic plans for the Regis site as part of the ambitious “Gardens by the Sea” redevelopments that emerged directly from the large [public consultation exercise in 2015](#) were approved by Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub Committee and Full Council in February and March 2017 respectively. This site was subsequently granted planning approval at appeal for a different scheme submitted by the Sir Richard Hotham Project.
- 1.2.11. An events budget for each town was approved by Cabinet in October 2019 with the aim of supporting town centre regeneration. The seafront, being close by, would also be used as a space for the events.
- 1.2.12. Full Council in September 2020 agreed to invite interested organisations to submit regeneration proposals for council-owned sites including those close to the seafront i.e. the Regis site, Gloucester Road car park and the Esplanade Skate-park site. During October and November 2020 a total of 11 submissions were made and they were presented to Members during February.
- 1.2.13. At Cabinet in November 2020 a paper was approved regarding a project to improve Place St Maur, and it was announced that the project had been granted £1.2m funding to match the supplementary estimate allocation of £370,000 made by the Council. This was endorsed by Full Council in January 2021. Place St Maur is an under used and unattractive public space that is a key link between the seafront and the town centre with poor surfacing and drainage.
- 1.2.14. The same meeting approved a report about improving beach access for mobility-impaired visitors to the seafront which explored potential different options and feasibility to enable access over the shingle to the sand revealed at low water and the waterfront. Selected options will be developed further.

1.3. DELIVERY PROGRESS UPDATE

- 1.3.1. The “Beach on the Beach” sand play area was completed in 2014 and was the first project delivered within the seafront improvement programme. It was a resounding success and was doubled in size in 2015. New features requested by visitors to the facility, such as seating and push-chair parking, were also added.

- 1.3.2. The new play area “Play on the Beach” was opened in May 2018 following an earlier public consultation which received support from 95% of respondents for a play area in this location, and advised the content, themes and styles of the play equipment. There is a strong focus on provision for children of all ages and abilities, including some wheel-chair specific play equipment and wheel-chair accessible flooring. The materials used are super-robust and naturalistic in style, and there is a “sea creatures” theme as chosen via the consultation.
- 1.3.3. The previous Foreshores Office opposite Esplanade Grande was demolished, and new public toilets built on the site during 2018. Due to latent building defects they had to be closed soon after opening. Following a prolonged legal case, a resolution was agreed that protects Council interests and rectification work is underway with the intention they will be reopened ahead of the summer season 2021.
- 1.3.4. A new smaller Beach Office was constructed for summer 2018 in a more suitable central location west of the Bullnose.
- 1.3.5. Outline café designs were worked up for the proposed new café near the bandstand, however the capital allocation to build this was removed so this project has been delayed pending both officer and financial resources to take it forward.
- 1.3.6. The Bandstand heritage reinstatement and refurbishment project has received Listed Building Planning consent and is funded via Coastal Revival Fund grant and Arun DC capital funds. The project is currently on site with completion due ahead of the 2021 summer season.
- 1.3.7. In respect of the Regis redevelopment site, consideration has been given about how to phase the development on this site and interested parties have recently presented their proposals for the site to members. Matters related to the Regis Centre / Alexandra Theatre are subject to other discussions regarding the proposed bid to the Levelling Up Fund and will be considered by this committee in a separate report.
- 1.3.8. Event funding to support town centre regeneration has been agreed in-principle between key partners (Arun DC, Bognor Regis Town Council, Bognor Regis BID and Butlin’s) for a two week good quality summer festival utilising the seafront, Place St Maur and The Esplanade using a temporary road closure. This concept also generated strong support from major event providers in the town and other stakeholders such as Artworks. The global pandemic has prevented formal agreement or funding commitments by partners, or any concrete action being taken towards the planning of this event.

1.3.9. The Gloucester Road kiosk lease has come to an end and the unit has been marketed for expressions of interest for an all-year round catering use with a lease of circa 10 years. The current condition of the building means significant investment will be required hence the length of lease in order to provide suitable business return. New operators will be required to provide details of the planned building improvements/refurbishment to be aligned with the Style Guide and the planned offer to ensure additionality to the seafront offer. The Seafront Delivery Plan indicates a longer-term ambition for Gloucester Road car park area to be a decked car park with associated young people/adult activities, so retaining this kiosk for circa 10 years fits in with the Plan. The car park is half owned by the Council, and half by Butlin's and while Butlin's supported the Seafront Delivery Plan proposals, any longer-term development on this site will need to be in full collaboration with Butlin's.

1.3.10. The lease for the Clarence Road Café Kiosk opposite the Town Hall and the License for the East Promenade Train are being renewed and a 3 year lease / License containing a rolling break clause has been offered in order to provide the Council suitable flexibility in delivering the agreed Seafront Delivery Plan.

1.4. FUTURE PROJECTS

1.4.1. The list of previously agreed deliverable interventions on Bognor Regis seafront is set out below. It is proposed that these projects will be included in the list of priority projects being considered in a separate report to the Economy Committee in July 2021.

1.4.2. **Bandstand Café** – east of the Bandstand – led by Property & Estates.
Proposed all-year round good quality catering offer with some indoor and plentiful outdoor seating. Within the Stalls Zone and previously approved for delivery in 2018.

Rationale – This wide part of the promenade is the only space wide enough to house a building large enough to include indoor seating. Research carried out with the public shows a strong desire for good quality daytime and evening beachfront catering with indoor seating. Significant regeneration benefit through new high-quality destination restaurant and financial return for the Council.

1.4.3. **New Beach Huts near Butlin's** - led by Property and Estates
Composite beach huts positioned along the promenade to the south of the promenade boundary with Butlin's. Within the Beach Zone and approved as part of the Seafront Delivery Plan in 2016.

Rationale – The Council is aware that there is strong demand for beach hut lets from both residents wanting seasonal leases and Butlin's customers and other visitors to the seafront wanting short term lets. The Council has funding allocated and, subject to relevant consents, could deliver up to 30 new huts in Bognor Regis.

1.4.4. Pop-up uses infrastructure – led by Property & Estates

Services infrastructure comprising plug and play floor hatches built into Stalls Zone where there is space for pop-up businesses to trade. Approved as part of the Stalls Zone Layout in June 2018.

Rationale – The provision of professional, separately metered electricity, water and drainage points will enable events and businesses easy access to services to provide additional temporary good-quality attractions and drive footfall. Public research indicated a desire for a wider range of good quality catering and other activities on the seafront.

1.4.5. New café No.2 - Led by Property & Estates

Two potential sites are suitable. Both sites are within the approved Stalls Zone Layout Plan 2018. Significant regeneration benefit and financial return for Council.

Option 1 - Demolish the Clarence Road Café unit and replace it with a permanent café on Site 5 of Stalls Zone layout opposite Clarence Road adjacent to the ramp from The Esplanade. Use existing café design as the basis for layout and style, obtain planning and market it as per Bandstand café

Option 2 - Demolish Clarence Road Café unit and replace with permanent café on existing site i.e. Site 6 on Stalls Zone Layout. Use existing café design as basis for layout and style, obtain planning consent and put the site to market as per Bandstand café

1.4.6. Promenade Public realm improvements

Improve public realm along promenade between Butlin's and the pier. Limited work has been done on this major project so the entire design and delivery process would be required. There is no capital funding currently allocated for this work so external public funding will be required. If external funding could be secured this project would bring a significant regeneration benefit.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

2.1 Members have asked officers to bring forward a list of agreed deliverable interventions for improvements on Bognor Regis seafront which is set out in the previous section (1.4 Future Projects).

2.2 The Cabinet Report in November 2020 that requested this paper be collated included the paragraph below in respect of delivery of these projects:

“The Coronavirus pandemic has created a tremendous amount of work for Officers over recent months and there does not appear to be any sight of a reduction in this, particularly now that we enter a second Lockdown. Because day to day service to the community (and support work behind the scenes) continues during the pandemic, the workload and time that Officers are already working is excessive. Whilst the proposals within the Appendix to the report are indeed worthy of following through (if agreed), the lack of capacity of Officers to deliver this work should not be underestimated. This lack of capacity will have an effect on the timescales for delivery.”

2.3	This lack of available officer resource remains true at the time of writing this report.	
2.4	Members are requested to indicate if there are any projects listed in this report that should not be included in the list of priority projects being considered in a comprehensive report to the July 2021 Economy Committee.	
3.	OPTIONS:	
3.1	Recommend to Full Council that the projects listed in this report are included in the list of priority projects being considered in a comprehensive report to the July 2021 Economy Committee OR	
3.2	Not to recommend to Full Council that the projects listed in this report are included in the list of priority projects being considered in a comprehensive report to the July 2021 Economy Committee	
4.	CONSULTATION:	
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council (for previous decisions)	x	
Relevant District Ward Councillors (for previous decisions)	x	x
Other groups/persons (please specify) Some Ward Cllrs have changed since decisions were made		
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial	x	
Legal	x	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		x
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		x
Sustainability		x
Asset Management/Property/Land	x	
Technology		x
Other (please explain) Officer resources	x	
6. IMPLICATIONS:		
<u>Financial:</u> Some of the proposed projects either require capital funding, and/or will provide and bring income for the Council		
<u>Legal:</u> Legal agreements such as leases and licenses will be required for some proposed projects		
<u>Land:</u> All proposed projects are located on Council-owned land		
<u>Officer resources:</u> No officer resource is currently allocated to the proposed projects, and with savings being made by the Council there may not be available capacity within relevant departments to facilitate delivery of these projects		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To improve the economy of Bognor Regis post-pandemic through attracting more visitors that stay longer and spend more locally.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Cabinet Report: Covid-19 Recovery Working Party: Key Outcomes from Cabinet: Appendix A: November 2020](#)

[Bognor Regis Regeneration: Seafront Delivery Plan Committee Report: June 2016](#)

[Bognor Regis Regeneration: Seafront Progress Committee Report: June 2018](#)

[Bognor Regis Regeneration: Gardens by the Sea: February 2017](#)

[Cabinet Report: Innovation Our High Streets: October 2019](#)

[Full Council: Invitation to submit regeneration scheme proposals: Sept 2020 Item 199](#)

[Cabinet Report: Place St Maur: November 2020 and Appendix](#)

[Cabinet Report: Beach Access: November 2020](#)

[Bognor Regis Seafront Delivery Plan](#)