Lowestoft Coastal Community Seafront Strategy Summary

THE GREAT BRITISH COAST
 Lowellsof Coastal Community Team
 Working together to be better than ever
Our Vision & objectives

The Lowestoft Coastal Community Team (CCT) was formed in spring 2015. Part of a Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) initiative we are one of over 100 CCTs across the country set up to encourage greater partnership working in order to develop local solutions to economic issues facing our coastal towns.

Our CCT is made up of representatives from a number of local organisations, groups, and businesses including:

- Lowestoft Rising
- Suffolk County Council
- Lowestoft Vision (Business Improvement District)
- Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
- Kirkley Business Association
- Lowestoft Tourism Group
- Claremont Pier
- South Pier
- Community Action Suffolk
- Waveney District Council

We have consulted with over 500 local residents, visitors, businesses and other stakeholders on the issues facing Lowestoft, and specifically the coastal areas of the North Denes (East of England Park) and the South Beach.

This seafront strategy has been developed to highlight the priorities that will assist economic growth and will be constantly reviewed and updated.

Our ambition is for Lowestoft to be an attractive and vibrant place to live, work, and visit throughout the year. We want the local community to take pride in the town, and for there to be an improved perception of Lowestoft from those outside the area, resulting in an increase in the number of new visitors.

The town should build on its unique destination as the most easterly town in the country, and make more of its heritage assets and maritime history. Alongside this we want to see improved access, navigation and tourist information. The seafront should benefit the local community resulting in improved health and wellbeing and there will be flourishing town centre, with increased investment, destination shops, and higher spend in the High Street.
We have chosen to focus on six priorities which we believe are critical to establishing the conditions to enable economic growth and ensure the seafront is an attractive high-quality environment for residents, businesses and visitors throughout the year.

**Promote and grow the visitor economy and improve the visitor experience**

**Enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of public areas for all**

**Improve and increase community facilities and activities, especially those to promote healthy lifestyles**

**Create links (including navigation) to support the growth and performance of the retail sector (including the Historic High Street, the Town Centre, and Kirkley Village)**

**Find sustainable uses of heritage and cultural assets and make more of our maritime history**

**Ensure that coastal protection measures are delivered in harmony with the CCT vision and actions**

**Priority 1: Seafront economy - tourist attractions & facilities - promote & grow the visitor economy & improve the visitor experience**

Lowestoft seafront needs to offer a great visitor experience, which is competitive with other seaside towns and is a place the local community are proud of.

We intend to raise our profile by retaining and enhancing our unique historic assets, by broadening our tourism offer, celebrating our uniquely placed location as the most easterly town, and by making Lowestoft a key destination to visit along the East Anglian Coast.

We want to support existing businesses to grow, and encourage new businesses to invest in the area.

The importance of the seafront is essential to the town’s tourism economy which contributes to an estimated £56million and sustains 1,772 jobs annually. In particular the South Beach offers a huge draw to the majority of the town’s 1.2million visitors each year.

This priority will be achieved when:

- We have encouraged day visitors to stay and spend more as well as attracting higher spending visitors and have more visitors all year round
- New businesses are operating along the seafront adding to the range of food, retail and leisure choices including more options for the evening
- We have developed and promoted an alternative tourist offer for the North Beach which is distinctly different to the South Beach
- Marketing vehicles such as Discover Lowestoft and The Suffolk Coast (Destination Management Organisation) have successfully raised our profile and brought in higher value tourism
- The seafront has updated and clear visitor information

The South Beach has a Blue Flag Award, a prestigious international quality mark, guaranteeing to everyone that the beach is amongst the finest not only in this country, but globally.
Priority 2: Active seafront - improve & increase community facilities & activities, especially those that promote healthy lifestyles

There is an opportunity to introduce facilities that promote healthy lifestyles, especially in underutilised areas along the seafront. Creating and promoting an active seafront will add to the existing tourism offer, attract new visitors and benefit all by helping to improve health and wellbeing.

We have been successful at finding new and interesting ways to get the local community active and support Suffolk’s ambition to become England’s Most Active County. We need to take advantage of this and build on the momentum. In addition walking is the most popular activity of visitors to the seafront and recent consultations rated the creation of trails as one of the key ways to improve the seafront.

This priority will be achieved when:
- There is active participation in new trails along the seafront, including the new England Coast Path
- We have worked with partners to take advantage of national initiatives such as the Women’s Cycling Tour to promote recreational activities on the seafront
- We have supported new sporting and recreational events in the town centre and seafront which meet the needs of the local community
- Underused areas along the seafront have been developed offering more provision for recreation resulting in improved health and wellbeing

2015 saw the start of the UK’s most easterly Park Run. 100 people run 5km along the seafront for free each week. At the other end of town is the annual Scores Race, now in its 21st year! People take on the challenge of the 13 stepped hills, which make up the Scores.

Priority 3: Heritage & culture - find sustainable uses of heritage / cultural assets & make more of our maritime history

Lowestoft has a wealth of heritage, with historic buildings in both the south and north offering a wide range of tourist attractions and the opportunity to learn about our interesting local history; from the Victorian seafront and gardens along the South Beach to the medieval town in the north and the home the old fishing village in the North Denes.

Along the South Beach there also remain a number of traditional 1930s seaside assets, which are locally listed including the beach look-out shelter and chalets. Currently these assets are in a state of disrepair and need significant investment to fully recognise their importance on the architectural history of the area. Through investment and by promoting the beautiful areas already on offer along the seafront such as Kensington Gardens in the south and Sparrows Nest in the north there is a real opportunity to showcase what we have to offer, which sets us apart from other seaside towns.

This priority will be achieved when:
- We have progressed development opportunities and environmental enhancements including the Scores, the Historic High Street, North Denes (and Lowestoft Ness) which make the most of our historic assets across north Lowestoft
- We have progressed development opportunities and enhancements on the south seafront which make the most of the historic assets
- There is improved interpretation of the historic buildings, gardens and local history through tourist information provision
Priority 4: Accessible seafront - enhance the attractiveness & accessibility of public areas for all

The use of the beaches, parks, gardens, squares, promenades and other public spaces all play a vital role in the social and economic life of the residents and visitors. Enhancing the area will encourage more movement around the seafront allowing people to explore what is on offer and allow people to take part in informal activities and relaxation such as walking, jogging, exercising dogs, kite flying, picnics, meeting friends and ultimately enjoying the views and the experience of being outside in a safe and welcoming environment. It is vital that we sustain people’s interest in our seafront and town centre, ensure these areas are accessible for all and are places that we can be proud of. Currently there is some concern over areas of neglect, the poor condition of walls, appearance of weeds and litter and some public spaces not being used to their full capacity.

This priority will be achieved when:
• There is a marked improvement in the appearance of public spaces, there are more opportunities for such spaces to be used and they become destination points
• We have commissioned an access audit to make recommendations for improvements and have built these into future plans
• There is greater pride in our public spaces, encouraged by community groups and champions, and this has resulted in less littering and vandalism

Priority 5: Connectivity - create links to support the growth & performance of the retail sector (including the Historic High Street, the Town Centre & Kirkley Village)

With a distance of approximately four miles along this coastal strip there needs to be a real draw and a clear understanding of what people can see and do along this journey. There have been a number of wayfinding projects over the years to aid people navigation however this has led to confusion rather than a clear understanding of how to travel around. It is not necessarily the placement of the signs that is the issue, but their inability to take visitors on an easily understood journey from one location to another i.e. from the station to the beach.

Through investment in a new way-finding system we will provide signs with walking distances, maps to show the area’s layout and promote interesting destination points. This will make people feel more secure and give the sense there are natural rewards along the journey for example when arriving at either of the two beautiful parks, Kensington Gardens and Sparrows Nest, which are located at both ends of this coastal strip.

The CCT has secured funding from the Coastal Revival Fund to create masterplans for the seafront areas which will take improvements to connectivity into consideration.

This priority will be achieved when:
• There is a new way-finding system in place to encourage movement, resulting in improved footfall in side retail streets and visitors exploring more attractions
• We have delivered other projects which have helped to link the town centre to other areas, such as lighting, walking and heritage trails
• We have improved key tourist routes and linkages, in particular for the Historic High Street and Kirkley Village
• As a result of infrastructure improvements we have progressed longer term development opportunities in particular around Station Square

Natural England has begun work on the England Coast Path project; a long distance trail that will allow people to walk around the whole English Coast! The path takes in our Seafront Strategy area and will be designated by 2018. This will attract more visitors and more spend to the local area.
Priority 6: Coastal protection - ensure that coastal protection measures are delivered in harmony with CCT vision & objectives

Lowestoft seafront has been subject to substantial coastal erosion in recent years, particularly on the beaches closest to the town centre. In 2013 Lowestoft suffered the worst flooding in the town for 60 years, resulting in further damage to the seawall defences at the South Beach. By spring 2016 the works to repair the seawall and restore a small beach at this location will be complete. Looking forward we will need to take into consideration the changing nature of the beach, the need to retain footfall at the northern end to support existing and new businesses, protect previous investment and promote links to the town centre.

We are also working with Great Yarmouth Borough Council to develop a strategy for the future management of the coast from Gorleston-on-Sea to Lowestoft and consider options for the North Beach. Lowestoft also faces the threat of surface water and tidal flooding, and flooding can also occur when high tide and severe wet weather happen at the same time.

Strategic flood protection proposals are being delivered by the Lowestoft Transport and Infrastructure Group with a funding package identified to deliver a tidal flood barrier by 2020. A temporary barrier will be in place by spring 2016 to offer a short term solution to most vulnerable locations in Lowestoft and as well mitigate against surface water flooding.

This priority will be achieved when:
• There is a coordinated approach with the Coastal Management Team to deliver projects which are beneficial to both partners’ objectives
• We have identified a new vision and purpose for the North end of the South Beach
• We have ensured improvements for Lowestoft Ness and North Denes are considerate of coastal protection measures and joint funding solutions are identified
To meet these priorities a Delivery Plan has been prepared which sets out the projects and activities which will take place over the next 5 years and beyond. The Plan also sets out the proposed timeframe, lead partners and funding requirements.

The Delivery Plan spans the lifetime of the projects and is a ‘live’ document which will be monitored and updated regularly by the team. We will continue to consult widely with the community to ensure the work of the team drives forward economic growth delivers real opportunities and jobs in the area for many years to come and makes Lowestoft even better.

The Coastal Revival Fund money will now be used to further our plans for the areas to the north and south of the town centre, with two masterplans that will help us develop the priorities set out in this plan.
View the full strategy at
www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/lowestoft