

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

9 March 2015

ITEM 7(e)

Whitley Bay Seafront
Master Plan - Update

Portfolio(s): Regeneration

Cabinet Member(s): The Elected Mayor

Report from Service

Area: Business and Economic Development
Chief Executive's Office

Responsible Officer: Patrick Melia, Chief Executive

Tel: (0191) 643 6091

Wards affected: St Mary's, Whitley Bay, Monkseaton
North

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of public engagement and therefore seek the approval of the Whitley Bay Seafront Master Plan, which is defined by a list of projects set out in the Appendix to the report.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) Welcome the support for the Master Plan received from the public;
- (2) Formally adopt the Master Plan, defined by the list of projects set out in the Appendix to this report, as the basis for the regeneration of Whitley Bay Seafront;
- (3) Authorise the Head of Business and Economic Development to identify sources of external funding to implement projects in the Master Plan that are unfunded.

1.3 Forward Plan:

1.3.1 Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 2nd February 2015.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

1.4.1 This report relates to the following priorities in the 2014/18 Our North Tyneside Plan:

Our Places:

Our Places will be places that people like living in and will attract others to either visit or live.

Investing in high quality infrastructure across the borough to provide excellent recreational facilities for residents and visitors.

Work with residents, communities and businesses to regenerate the borough;

We will do this by:

Working with the private sector developers and residents to regenerate the Whitley Bay Seafront.

Our People:

Our People will be listened to by services that respond better and faster to their needs.

We will do this by:

Promoting active community engagement and access to our parks, open spaces and playsites.

1.5 Information:

- 1.5.1 The Whitley Bay Seafront Master Plan (the Master Plan) has been prepared to provide a clear vision for regeneration of this important part of the borough's coast. It takes into account the ambition of the local community and the Authority to see a regenerated and rejuvenated coast and seaside resort, that is a popular visitor destination as well as an important leisure resource for local residents. The Master Plan will therefore contribute directly towards ensuring North Tyneside is a great place to live, work and visit.
- 1.5.2 It is a partnership regeneration strategy with the private sector and also complements proposals by Whitley Bay Big Local for the town centre. It therefore meets the Council Plan objective of working with private sector developers and the community to regenerate the Whitley Bay Seafront.
- 1.5.3 The Master Plan builds upon the recent successful regeneration initiatives undertaken or underway along other parts of the coast, such as Cullercoats Bay, Tynemouth Long Sands and Village and the Fish Quay. In particular, it supports and enhances the investment by the Authority in the refurbishment of Waves, which is one of the most popular leisure pools in the region; the refurbishment of the Playhouse Theatre, which continues to provide a popular range of music, dance, comedy and family productions by national, international and local performers (and was awarded a Certificate of Excellence by Trip Adviser in 2014 for the second year running); the award winning improvement of Whitley Park with a variety of new childrens play facilities; the Panama skate park and the creation of the new Spanish City Plaza. Including the acquisition of the Dome and other properties on Spanish City Island, the Avenue and the High Point Hotel, over £25m has been invested by the Authority in regeneration initiatives at the seafront to date.
- 1.5.4 The Master Plan covers the Whitley Bay coastal zone from the Southern Lower promenade to St Mary's Lighthouse and comprises a number of public sector and private sector led projects set out in Appendix 1 to this report that will rejuvenate this part of the coast helping to increase the number of tourist visits to the borough, with important benefits to the local economy through creating new business opportunities and jobs.

- 1.5.5 At the heart of the Master Plan is the Spanish City Island site, with the restoration of the Dome creating a new hub for leisure activities alongside a new hotel, restaurant and public car park.
- 1.5.6 The enhancement of Northern Promenade, including a significant improvement in access for users to this existing leisure resource, made possible by demolition of the Boardwalk, is also central to the objectives of the Master Plan. Proposed works to enhance Northern Promenade include new surfacing, providing streetlighting, new seats, bins and shelters and improvements to the access ramps to the beach.
- 1.5.7 Investment in the lighthouse at St. Mary's Island will be vital to balance the visitor offer, stretching from the Dome along The Links and Northern Promenade. Discussions are underway with the Heritage Lottery Fund to bid for funds to address the conservation issues and extend the existing capacity of the site. Visitor numbers and resident engagement suggest that the Lighthouse continues to be one of the most popular attractions at the Coast.
- 1.5.8 Other projects across the Master Plan area include works to rationalise the footpaths on The Links, particularly outside the original front entrance of the Dome. The old seafront road will be removed and the area landscaped to integrate into The Links; toilet facilities will be upgraded; the junction of South Parade with the Promenade will be traffic calmed and improvements around the Rendezvous Café will take place.
- 1.5.9 The Master Plan also includes the demolition of the Central Lower Promenade structure, which is at the end of its lifetime and will be replaced by a new grassed bank and sea wall.
- 1.5.10 Private sector led proposals include the overnight beach huts on Northern Promenade, the new visitor centre at St Mary's headland, new housing on the site of the former High Point Hotel and the new hotel and restaurant at Spanish City Island.
- 1.5.11 The Master Plan was informed by the many responses and comments that have been presented to the Authority during numerous consultation exercises undertaken over several years in relation to Spanish City Island and the Dome. However, a further public engagement stage on the Master Plan commenced in December 2014 with a two day event at the Whitley Bay Customer First Centre. This dedicated event on the Master Plan enabled members of the public to inspect the detailed proposals and provide their views. A total of five hundred and fifty eight people attended the two day event, many of whom completed comment cards on the day. The Master Plan was widely reported in the local media ensuring extensive coverage of the proposals.
- 1.5.12 Following the December launch, the Master Plan information was made available on the North Tyneside Council website and enabled people to leave comments. The website has received over 1,550 visits since going live. The information was also displayed during January 2015 in the four main Customer First Centres and at Quadrant, providing an opportunity for all the borough residents to view and comment on the proposals.
- 1.5.13 Information was also displayed at the engagement event and on the website setting out the anticipated timescales for delivery of each project, estimated costs, whether funding was confirmed and the project owner. The Master Plan will see over £36m investment along Whitley Bay Seafront made up of grant funding, Authority contribution, private and other funding.

1.5.14 In addition to the December event and the subsequent display of the Master Plan in Customer First Centres and online, direct consultation has taken place with the Whitley Bay Park Run regarding the demolition and replacement of the promenade shelters. This has met with a positive response.

1.5.15 Responses to the Master Plan engagement

1.5.16 Around 250 responses have been received to the consultation. A full list of the responses received is attached as Appendix 2. Responses have been categorised as either:

- positive;
- positive with comments or suggestions for other projects or improvements;
- negative;
- negative with comments or suggestions for other projects or improvements;
- neutral; or,
- neutral with comments or suggestions for other projects or improvements

1.5.17 Bearing in mind the Master Plan was informed by responses from previous engagement events, the majority of comments received in response to the engagement have been in favour of the proposals.

1.5.18 Positive comments include:

- Looks really promising and exciting.
- Hope to see it taking shape over the next 3-4 years;
- Best proposal so far;
- Not before time but if the plans come to fruition it should make a big difference to the sea front;
- It looks lovely and anything would be an improvement on the present situation;
- Ambitious, well planned, aspirational, go for it;
- All proposals seem very good both practically and aesthetically, I hope it all happens sooner rather than later;
- Wonderful proposals – absolutely no negative comments. Hoping for an early start;
- As a newcomer to Whitley Bay, these plans seem really good and are pleasing as we intend to stay here long term and things can only improve! Well done to all involved!
- We think the whole scheme looks fantastic. Very impressed;
- This display is excellent. Some visitors seemed intent on finding something wrong but I only heard positive comments from the majority. Plenty of knowledgeable staff members who handled the questions very well. I look forward to the next two years watching it happen;
- Fantastic plans. Great to see the reworked Dome to include the cinema and knock out the first floor. All well thought out and integrated. Lighthouse looks great;
- Very good event, well attended. Lots of information and helpful people;
- Fully support what they are trying to achieve.
- The plans for Whitley Bay look fantastic! Really excited to see the finished results, Good luck!
- At last some plans that hopefully will breathe new life into Whitley Bay. We have waited far too long to regenerate our town. The visitors centre and cafe at St Mary's lighthouse is a great idea we need to attract visitors.
- The Facebook Group 'Friends of Whitley Bay Promenade Shelters' will support the plans which involve the demolition of the existing shelters. If the ironwork could be retained or incorporated into another structure this would be a bonus.

- Very good, lets get on with it. For far too long we have listened to protests from residents of Whitley Bay. Fact: the beach, buildings around it and The Links do not belong to Whitley Bay residents, they belong to everyone living on North Tyneside.

1.5.19 Suggestions for new projects or improvements to projects already in the Master Plan include:

- The Empress Ballroom is an eyesore and should be demolished or improved;
- Paint the Dome quickly;
- There is a need for more shelters for weather protection;
- New street furniture and lighting should have a traditional design;
- Routes for cyclists and pedestrians should be separated;
- The Panama swimming club building needs improvement;
- The new street furniture needs to be high quality;
- Materials should be high quality and we should avoid using concrete seats;
- Information boards updating progress with projects are needed;
- A farmers or local crafts market would be welcomed;
- Planting should include native plants and grasses and low maintenance shrubs would be preferable to concrete;
- There is a need for groynes to prevent sand being washed away;
- Need for adequate car parking;
- Extend the northern promenade to St Mary's Headland;
- Seating should be better distributed;
- The beach access by the mini golf needs improvement;
- Please don't change the Rendezvous Café.

1.5.20 It is considered that most of these suggestions can be accommodated at the more detailed stage of the individual projects in the Master Plan. However, there are some we cannot accommodate, for example demolishing the Empress Ballroom - as it isn't in Council ownership and is Grade 2 Listed. Extending the promenade to St Mary's Headland would be cost prohibitive.

1.5.21 Negative comments mainly relate to the following concerns:

- that there is an overall lack of ambition in the Master Plan;
- Nothing to attract visitors back;
- that the Master Plan won't happen quickly enough;
- that funding hasn't been confirmed for the projects;
- that the beach huts or hotel would attract anti-social behaviour;
- that the proposed visitor centre at St Mary's Headland is too big and will adversely affect the environment;
- that the demolition of the Boardwalk is unnecessary;
- the land train won't work and is a waste of money;
- that the lighting on Northern Promenade will spoil the night sky;
- not enough detail;
- that Central Lower promenade shouldn't be demolished
- the existing shelters should be kept or replicated;

1.5.22 As with the suggestions above, many of these objections can be dealt with at the more detailed stage of each project. For example, the scale and impact of visitor facilities at St Mary's Headland will be considered at the planning application stage. It is not considered that any fundamental issues have been raised that outweigh the other majority positive comments in favour of the Master Plan.

1.5.23 Funding and Programme

- 1.5.24 For the public engagement event a schedule of the Master Plan projects was provided broken down into public or private funded, unfunded and likely timescale. An updated version of the schedule is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.5.25 Given the location and the most logical sequence in which to undertake each project, funding has been allocated from the existing 2015-2019 Investment Plan budgets for Coastal Regeneration and Whitley Bay Regeneration to cover the indicative cost estimates. Other projects are separately funded from the 2015-2019 Investment Plan, such as rebuilding Central Lower Promenade and St Mary's Lighthouse. A number of projects will also be jointly funded from the Asset Planned Maintenance budget as they relate to repairs and maintenance obligations. This gives a clear indication of which priority projects the Authority will undertake during 2015/16, which projects are planned for 2016/17 or later, those to be funded by the private sector and which projects will require funding to be identified or confirmed. Progress of projects against budgets will be monitored through the Whitley Bay Seafront Regeneration Seafront Board (chaired by the Chief Executive) and the Investment Programme Board and reported to Cabinet.
- 1.5.26 A small number of projects, although priorities for the Authority, are identified as unfunded because they are still the subject of bidding (such as restoration of the Dome) or where private sector investment has not been confirmed. These will quickly be redefined as funded as investment is confirmed.
- 1.5.27 Opportunities to bid for additional funding will be considered for unfunded projects (such as Coastal Communities Fund, Single Local Growth Fund or Investment Plan).

1.5.28 Next Steps

- 1.5.29 In relation to the responses received, it is not considered any of the negative comments raise issues of concern or require amendments to the Master Plan.
- 1.5.30 Where suggestions have been made to improve upon the Master Plan proposals that can be accommodated these will be considered during the detailed design stage as set out above.
- 1.5.31 It is therefore not intended to amend the Master Plan as displayed during the public engagement.
- 1.5.32 Subject to the Master Plan being confirmed by Cabinet it is intended to commence work on 2015/16 projects as quickly as possible in the new financial year.

1.6 **Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet may approve the recommendations contained in section 1.2 above to formally adopt the Master Plan and to authorise works to begin on the individual projects identified in Appendix 1, subject to the costs being contained within the existing Coastal Regeneration, Whitley Bay Regeneration, Central Lower Promenade and Planned Maintenance budgets.

Option 2

Cabinet may decide not to approve the recommendations contained in section 1.2 above.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

Option 1 is the recommended option as this will demonstrate the Authority's clear commitment to delivering the Whitley Bay Seafront Master Plan and to secure an improved quality of life for local residents; an improved environment for local business; and an enhancement of the visitor offer for tourists to the Borough. It helps provide certainty that the regeneration of the Whitley Bay seafront can proceed in a timely manner which is essential to ensure continued support for the overall scheme. The Authority will deliver the Council Plan objective to work with the private sector developers and residents to regenerate the Whitley Bay Seafront.

Conversely, given the level of support received during the public engagement failure to carry through the Master Plan will result in public disappointment and adverse publicity for the Authority. The Authority will fail to meet the Council Plan objective of working with the private sector developers and residents to regenerate the Whitley Bay Seafront.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Schedule of Master Plan projects

Appendix 2: Summary of responses

1.9 Contact officers:

Francis Lowes, Senior Manager Regeneration, Tel 0191 643 6421

Julie Bews, Regeneration Project Manager, Tel 0191 643 6428

David Anderson, Principal Accountant Commercial Finance, Tel 0191 643 5722

Alison Campbell, Senior Business Partner, Finance & Commercial Services Tel: 0191 643 7038

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Cabinet Report dated 16 August 2005 – Whitley Bay Regeneration.
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/minutes/cabinet/2005_08_16/Whitley%20Bay%20Regeneration.pdf
- (2) Cabinet Report dated 18 April 2006 – Spanish City Island/Whitley Bay Seafront Regeneration.
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/minutes/cabinet/2006_04_18/Spanish%20City%20Whitley%20Bay%20Seafront%20Regeneration.pdf
- (3) Cabinet Report dated 13 November 2007 – Whitley Bay Regeneration Update.
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=19056
- (4) Cabinet Report dated 8 March 2010 - Whitley Bay Regeneration: Spanish City Development CPO.
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=513018
- (5) Report to Cabinet 11th October 2010: The Coast Strategic Regeneration Framework
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=518423
- (6) Cabinet Report dated 11 April 2011 - Spanish City Development Opportunity
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=524461

- (7) Cabinet Report dated 11 April 2011 - Spanish City Development Opportunity – Final Bid Evaluation Report (exempt report)
- (8) Cabinet Report dated 12th November 2012 - Coastal Regeneration report including Spanish City Progress and external funding (exempt report)
- (9) Cabinet report dated 8 July 2013 - Coastal Regeneration Strategy and Spanish City Island Regeneration
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=545717
- (10) Cabinet report dated 10 March 2014 - Whitley Bay Seafront and Spanish City Island Regeneration Update and Compulsory Purchase Order (exempt report)
- (11) Cabinet report dated 8 September 2014 – Spanish City Island – Amendments to Heads of Terms with Robertson Property Limited (exempt report)
- (12) Cabinet report dated 12 January 2015 - Appointment of contractor for Spanish City Dome
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=557915
- (13) Cabinet report dated 12 January 2015 – Spanish City Heads of Terms update (exempt report)
- (14) Cabinet report dated 12 January 2015 – Spanish City Dome Compulsory Purchase Order Update (exempt report)
- (15) Cabinet report dated 12 January 2015 - Spanish City Dome Heritage Lottery Fund (exempt report)

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

2.1.1 The Master Plan contains a number of individual projects that are to be funded from the Whitley Bay Regeneration, Coastal Regeneration and Central Lower Promenade budgets within the 2015-2019 Investment Plan as set out in the Appendix. These budgets are as follows*:

	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	Total £m
DV054 Coastal Regeneration	700	500	-	1,200
DV019 Whitley Bay Regeneration	5,909	3,432	2,105	11,446
EV054 Central Lower Promenade	1,482	1,671	-	3,153
TOTAL	8,091	5,603	2,105	15,799

There is also an element of funding from the Asset Planned Maintenance Programme budget which supports projects being delivered through the Masterplan.

The costs of delivering the projects identified as funded within the Masterplan can be met from within existing budgets. If projects are proposed that cannot be met from within existing resources, then a further report will be brought to Cabinet outlining the additional financial implications.

2.1.2 Regular reporting of progress and adjustments to the schedule of projects will be reported to the Whitley Bay Seafront Regeneration Board, Investment Programme Board and through the regular monitoring reports to Cabinet.

2.1.3 Bids for external funding will be brought to Cabinet for approval prior to submission.

2.2 Legal

2.2.1 The Master Plan has no direct legal implications. Individual projects may require development agreements with private sector partners and bids for external funding may require funding agreements. These may require separate reports to Cabinet depending upon the individual circumstances.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Information on consultation/community engagement has been set out in the body of the main report.

2.4 Human rights

2.4.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

2.5.1 The Master Plan aims to make Whitley Bay Seafront highly accessible to all visitors. Individual projects will be designed to enhance accessibility. The restoration of the Dome includes providing a Changing Places toilet to complement the existing Changing Places toilet in Waves.

2.6 Risk management

2.6.1 The Master Plan contains a number of projects which will have individual risks. These will be assessed and managed accordingly. The Whitley Bay Seafront Regeneration Board meets on a monthly basis and includes consideration/mitigation of relevant risks with the support of the Strategic Risk Adviser.

2.7 Crime and disorder

2.7.1 The Master Plan aims to significantly increase the number of visitors/users of Whitley Bay Seafront, which will increase natural surveillance and therefore enhance security. New lighting on Northern Promenade and the demolition of the Boardwalk and the old shelters will also improve surveillance and security. New projects will be designed to mitigate issues of crime and disorder.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

2.8.1 The Master Plan aims to bring back into use the Dome and enhance the use of the existing Northern Promenade. Projects within the Master Plan will be designed to be low maintenance and use natural materials wherever possible. Landscaping of the banksides will also be designed to be low maintenance. Whitley Bay Seafront is well located to be accessed by a variety of forms of transport, including Metro, bus and cycles and the Master Plan builds upon these by traffic calming the junction of South Parade with the Promenade and by opening up Northern Promenade. The land train will provide the opportunity for park and ride between Spanish City Island and St Mary's Headland.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Deputy Chief Executive X
- Head(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Head of Corporate Strategy X