

Report to:

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

Relevant Officer:

Lisa Arnold, Strategic Head of Service of Community and Wellbeing

Date of Decision:

12 October 2022

GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To review progress on the implementation of the Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy and associated action plan in the period between March 2022 and October 2022.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the progress of the GBI Strategy and Action Plan and to identify any further areas for scrutiny as appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure effective scrutiny of the GBI Strategy and progress on the associated Action Plan.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool
- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 This report provides an update on the performance of the Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy and associated Action Plan adopted on 25 February 2019.

6.2 Throughout this report, references are made to Green and Blue Infrastructure or GBI, which is defined within the strategy as:

“a network of multifunctional green space, which delivers a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities... As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include streams, the sea and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls.”

6.3 Blackpool’s GBI strategy is being delivered by Blackpool Council in partnership amongst internal directorates, private developers, landowners, schools, healthcare providers, infrastructure managers and the local community.

6.4 Blackpool’s GBI Strategy has identified 6 strategic goals and implementation priorities:

- Engaging People in Health and Well-being
- Enhancing the Visitor Experience
- Greener Housing and Infrastructure
- Enabling Productive Green Business and Workers
- Promoting a Green Image and Culture
- Improving Habitats and Benefitting Pollinators

6.5 In order to deliver the GBI strategy an Action Plan has been developed with 4 objectives:

- Protect and Enhance GBI
- Create and Restore GBI
- Connect and Link GBI
- Promote GBI

7.0 Progress on GBI Strategy

7.1 GBI reporting

This report focuses on the time period between March 2022 and October 2022 following the annual report presented on 2 March 2022.

7.2 The delivery of the GBI strategy and associated Action Plan undertook an internal audit in September 2022. The audit found no High Risk recommendations and highlighted recommendations regarding the detail of reporting and measuring of the Strategy’s progress.

7.3 The Audit recommendations which highlight actions to the reporting structure will be implemented ahead of and reported on at the annual report to the Scrutiny Leadership Board in March 2023.

7.4 Previous Report to Scrutiny Leadership Board March 2022

A progress report presented to Scrutiny committee on the 2nd March 2022 highlighted the following future priorities for the next 12months.

- Town Centre Strategy
- Developing a Stanley Park Masterplan
- Growing green space volunteering
- Ecological review and Management Plan for Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve
- Tree Planting
- Website creation
- Strengthening links with the Climate agenda

7.5 Town Centre Strategy

The update of the Town Centre Strategy has been completed by consultants CBRE, and the associated Action Plan is now subject to additional engagement activity in order to identify clear actions, of which GBI improvement opportunities will be included. During the initial engagement for the Town Centre Strategy, the need for more GBI in the town centre came through strongly and this has been reflected by CBRE when drafting the Strategy. (*Action 2.1*)

7.6 Developing a Stanley Park Masterplan

A draft Masterplan is currently in progress involving consultation with stakeholders and the Friends of Stanley Park. In addition work has been undertaken to improve park infrastructure including the Cocker Clock Tower, Play area, toilets and fountain. (*Action 1.1.2*)

7.7 Growing green space volunteering

Blackpool Council led volunteering has expanded on Blackpool's open spaces with regular activity at Marton Mere, Revoe Community Garden and various play areas across the town. A new Friends Group has been established at Bridgehouse Recreation Area and partnership working with groups such as ROC and the Windmill Group has increased involvement in caring for open spaces. (*Action 4.1.4*)

7.8 Ecological review and Management Plan for Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve

A stakeholder group has been set up to discuss the management objectives of Marton Mere and establish the scope of the programme. The group is pulling together a brief for writing the management plan based on the eight step process highlighted in appendix A. (*Action 1.5.2*)

7.9 Tree Planting

The tree planting season is October to March and therefore funded planting projects have been programmed in for this period in various locations across the town including the replacement of growing Christmas Trees in those locations required. *(Action 2.2.1)*

7.10 Website creation

New webpages are being developed with the Communications Team for Blackpool's Parks and Open spaces, including pages on greening and GBI. The website functionality has been built and the teams involved are currently populating them with text and images. *(Action 4.1.9)*

Sections include:

- Park information
- Events
- Volunteering opportunities
- GBI strategy news and stories

7.11 Strengthening links with the Climate agenda

The GBI Development Manager plays a key role on the Climate Emergency Steering Group to identify opportunities and ensure collaboration.

Identified within the Climate Action Plan is the action to "Consider declaring an Ecological Emergency"

In order to progress this action a working group has been set up to scope what this will involve. The GBI strategy and associated Action Plan will be a key element of this declaration process.

In addition, the GBI Development Manager now chairs the Staff Sustainability Group to improve Climate actions and awareness amongst Council Employees promoting a positive environmental culture in the organisation.

8.0 Action Plan Update

8.1 In addition to the priorities identified for 2022, there has been additional progress on many other Actions within the Action Plan. A full Action Plan update will be provided in the annual Spring report, however the information below highlights a few key updates on programmes since March 2022.

8.2 Park Development Plans

Park Development plans have been created for 3 parks, Anchorsholme, Watson Road and Devonshire Road Rock Gardens to highlight projects and improvements required. This will enable these parks to be submitted for Green flag in 2023. *(Action 1.3.1)*

8.3 Greening Blackpool Supplementary Planning Document

On 16 May 2022, The Greening Blackpool Supplementary Planning Document was adopted. The Greening Blackpool SPD provides direction on the importance for new development to fully consider landscaping and green infrastructure, including open space, sports and play facilities, amenity greenspace, public art, biodiversity and trees. Once adopted the document will be a material consideration when assessing relevant planning applications. *(Action 1.7.6)*

8.4 Shared Prosperity Fund Programmes

Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) has been identified for two projects associated with Green Infrastructure. Officers are working collaboratively to ensure there is high quality GI included within these projects and the addition of GI enhances each programmes aims and objectives which are highlighted below. *(Action 1.7)*

Town Centre Improvements - Funding has been identified for Interventions in line with the refreshed Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan, including coverage of Priority Theme 1A: Streetscape, which covers street furniture and planting, and Priority Theme 1B: Environment, which includes green infrastructure.

Flood resilience- This project aims to protect communities from the increasing risk of surface level flood caused by climate change and increasing severity storms.

The project will reduce the risk of flooding, have a measurable amount of properties better protected, work in communities at risk and improve community green space.

8.5 Site Improvements

Pathways have now been installed at Bridgehouse Farm recreation ground, trees planted and additional maintenance undertaken to improve the site's usage. A Friends Groups has been established and is working alongside the Parks Development Team to further improve the site. The local community have been very positive about the improvements and wheelchairs and prams are now regularly using the space. *(Action 2.7.2)*

Stanley Park toilets will be undergoing restoration and plans have been submitted to Planning for consideration. The renovations feature a green roof and improvements to the flower beds through the addition of planting lavenders and cheery trees.

8.6 Promoting GBI

Blackpool Park Rangers have continued to undertake engagement activities on with young

children through the BetterStart funded programme. In addition activities have been able to expand to Kingscote Park and Anchorsholme Park through alternative funding models. The Park Rangers are also extending their programme to include Beach Schools, which promotes and encourages imaginative play on the beach. (*Action 4.3.1*)

9.0 Future priorities for next 6 months

The main GBI focus of the next 6 months will be on ensuring tree planting programmes are undertaken during the winter planting season.

Progress will continue to be focused at the above priorities and work programmes, with the addition of scoping works to include the dredging of Stanley Park Lake. Discussions are in progress with partners to establish costs and disposal options for 10,000m³ of silt.

Actions recommendations from the Internal Audit report will be undertaken to collect additional KPI's a reporting for the annual spring Scrutiny Leadership Board report.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 3(a): Marton Mere Management Plan development process

10.0 Financial considerations:

10.1 The Action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and is dependent on being able to direct revenue funding to the plan and also achieving external funding from partners and various funding streams available.

11.0 Legal considerations:

11.1 Legal considerations will be dealt with as they arise.

12.0 Risk management considerations:

12.1 The key risk relates to Green and Blue not being a part of 'Making Blackpool Better' in relation to inclusion in all our major capital schemes and developments.

A further risk is not being able to release revenue funding to support the plan and achieve capital funding.

13.0 Equalities considerations:

13.1 This strategy aims to reduce inequalities and promote community cohesion in line with the Council's

ethical policy.

14.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

14.1 The GBI Strategy is a key document for improving Blackpool's sustainability and climate reduction ambitions. The increase in quality GBI in the town will aid climate adaptation, improve biodiversity and bring positive environmental changes.

15.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

15.1 During the development of the Strategy, consultation was undertaken with:

1. Interdepartmental steering group
2. Focus groups and 1 to 1 interviews with key individuals
3. Councillor information sessions
4. Attendance at all Scrutiny Committees and special scrutiny committee organised
5. Attendance at Health and wellbeing Board
6. Public consultation
7. Consultation through Open Spaces Network
8. Local Business Forum
9. Schools Forum.

16.0 Background papers:

16.1 Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

[Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2019 - 2029](#)

Green and Blue Infrastructure Action Plan

[Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure Action Plan 2019 - 2029](#)

Greening Blackpool SPD

[Greening Blackpool SPD adopted May 2022](#)

Blackpool Tree Strategy

[Tree Strategy 2021-2031 \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](#)