

# Scrutiny briefing note

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Panel have asked to monitor progress on the following issues. This briefing contains the latest position as at 29 July 2020.

## **Subject: Historic Vessels' Conservation**

North East Lincolnshire Council (the Council) is responsible for the care and custodianship of the 'North East Lincolnshire's Collection' on behalf of the local community. The Collection includes three historic vessels: The Ross Tiger, which is the centrepiece of the Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre (GFHC) and the largest asset in the Council's Museum Collection; The Esther/GIC; and The Perseverance.

Heritage tourism is at the forefront of Grimsby's regeneration plans and the Museum Service Collection of ships' models and the historic vessels play a significant role in the development of Grimsby's heritage and cultural offer at the GFHC. The vessels are central to the story of both national and local maritime history and can take visitors back to the Victorian era and beyond, celebrating the town's main accolade of being the premier fishing port in the World and playing a key role in developing the fishing industry. The vessels allow the GFHC to illustrate life in what is still regarded as the most dangerous peacetime occupation in Britain. Grimsby's role also helped change the diet of the World as Britain's famous fish and chips would not have existed without it.

Located within the Heritage Action Zone, it will be necessary to ensure that any future plans to develop the GFHC are aligned with the Arups' Masterplan for Grimsby as part of the Stronger Towns Fund bid. The current development at Grimsby's oldest dock (Alexandra) for example, is strongly linked to one of the town's most important stories which can help visitors to understand the heritage skills of boat building on the Grimsby haven, believed to go back to Saxon times. Indeed, Esther is the last known vessel to be built in this dock.

In July 2019, the Scrutiny Panel received a report updating on progress in relation to the conservation of the three historic fishing vessels. This detailed the requirement to prepare Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) for all three vessels. CMPs set out the long-term management strategy for heritage assets, explaining the significance of the asset and how any future repairs or alterations will be carried out in order to protect that significance.

The Council secured funding from the Coastal Revival Fund to support the preparation of the CMPs and commissioned maritime heritage specialists and engineers to undertake the work. The CMPs were prepared with specialist knowledge from Beckett Rankine Engineers and Naval architect Wyn Davies, in accordance with relevant guidelines provided by National Historic Ships and the Collections Trust.

The content of the CMPs is summarised as follows:

- a description of the heritage assets and their significance;
- risks and opportunities in relation to the long-term survival of the heritage asset;
- policies governing conservation; new work; public and disabled access; managing the impact of climate change and other environmental impacts; and managing information about the heritage asset.

Key emerging issues identified in the CMPs include:

- the need for short-term, high priority maintenance to the exterior timber and steel upper decks of the Ross Tiger and for repainting and anode protection of the hull;
- the need for the Esther to be raised from Alexandra Dock, and conserved within a controlled environment;
- some future repairs/improvements needed to the vessel supports for the Perseverance, which is housed inside the GFHC.

The information provided by the CMPs helped to inform an expression of interest (EOI) which was submitted to the Business Development Group (BDG) earlier in the year, focused on the essential maintenance works needed for the Ross Tiger and the raising of the Esther. Because of the close proximity of both vessels, works to the hull will require the controlled movement of the Ross Tiger away from the Esther, which will then enable the Esther to be re-floated, digitally scanned to assess what restoration is needed, and removed from Alexandra Dock for controlled storage.

Having considered the EOI, the BDG recommended that the project be moved to a full business case with a view to seeking external funding to support the essential works outlined.

Next Steps for the historic vessels' maintenance project:

- Complete the full business case and submit to the Council's BDG for review.
- Continue to investigate funding options for the maintenance works for the vessels, including private sponsorship and potential partnership arrangements etc.
- Engage with NLHF officers to assess whether there is an option to develop a NLHF application in readiness for the reopening of the fund next year.

**Contact Officer: Helen Thompson, Investment Manager Economy & Growth, tel. 01472 325722**

If you require any further information please contact the named officer or alternatively,

**Anne Campbell**  
**Scrutiny & Committee Advisor**  
**Tel: 32-6132**

---

If you would like to find out more about scrutiny you can contact us:

**by email** [democracy@nelincs.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@nelincs.gov.uk)

**or by post**  
NELC Scrutiny Team,  
Municipal Offices,  
Town Hall Square,  
GRIMSBY DN31 1HU.

**Or go to:** [www.nelc.gov.uk/council/councillors-democracy-elections-/scrutiny/](http://www.nelc.gov.uk/council/councillors-democracy-elections-/scrutiny/)