

## **QUALITY COAST AWARDS**

**EXE 07/08/07**  
**Item 10**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Deputy Leader Councillor George Clements  
Portfolio Holder Councillor Geoff Blackwell  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Keith Parker, Head of Leisure and Environmental  
Services  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Janice Carrol, Waste Services Manager

### **Summary and Recommendation:**

This report outlines the implications of the new Quality Coast Awards and seeks Executives views on the applicability of these awards to Copeland. Executive is asked to consider the report and outline a preferred approach in respect of the awards for the future. Significant human and financial resources will be required if the Executive wish to pursue the Quality Coast Awards. The funding for this award could not be covered within existing budgets

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is to review the options available to the Council in respect of the Defra supported Quality Coast Awards for Copeland's amenity beaches. The Quality Coast Award, introduced in November 2006 replaced the former Seaside Awards that the Council had been consistently successful in achieving for amenity beaches since 1998. The new award scheme takes a broader view of beach management than its predecessor and is intended to ensure that the UK's beach managers are preparing for the EU Water Directive which becomes operational in 2015. The qualifying process for the new award is much more complex than its predecessor and has resulted in significantly fewer applicants than the previous Seaside Awards. It should be noted that there is currently only one award beach in the whole of the North West region (St Annes on the Lancashire Coast), none in Cornwall and only 76 in the whole of England. Under the previous Seaside Award scheme there were at least 10 award beaches in Cumbria alone.
- 1.2 In order to inform this report a desktop review of the award criteria has been carried out. In addition on 2 July an officer from Encams, the organisation responsible for managing and monitoring the awards attended a meeting in Copeland and accompanied the Waste Services Manager on a site visit to two of Copeland's beaches to discuss the potential for applications.
- 1.3 Due to the low number of applications for the new awards compared to those received in previous years for the Seaside Awards, it appears

Encams officers have been keen to discuss and advise to a certain degree on potential applications to encourage greater participation in the new award scheme.

## **2. THE AWARD**

- 2.1 Within the Quality Coast Award Framework there are four different categories of beach that an award can be applied for. The relevant category is entirely dependant upon what the beach is used for and therefore what type of beach users the award is aiming to attract. The four different categories have been derived from market research into why people go to a beach and what they expect when they get there. They are:
- a) Fun in the Sea, where the beach is used for swimming body boarding and other activities involving immersion in the water,
  - b) Bucket and Spade, where the beach is used primarily for paddling, low water contact and playing on the sand,
  - c) Relaxed Recreation where the beach has good facilities (e.g. toilets), access and infrastructure, and is used primarily for recreation, walking and other activities that do not use the water, and
  - d) Away from it all where the beach has few facilities and is used primarily for recreation, walking and other activities that do not use the water.

## **3. THE ISSUES**

- 3.1 Although there are general mandatory criteria that apply to all categories of awards, there are different requirements for each category of award. The Fun in the Sea category requires bathing water to have achieved the higher standard, "guideline" water quality that none of Copeland's beaches achieved in 2006/7. This said however, the samples tested so far this summer from Silecroft and Seascale beaches have met the guideline standards, whilst the samples from St Bees and Haverigg have met the mandatory standards. In accordance with the current European Directive, bathing water is tested weekly throughout the summer bathing season (1 May to 30 September) by the Environment Agency for sewage contamination.
- 3.2 Based on previous years overall water quality results, it would be prudent to assume that potential applications are restricted to categories b, c and d of the 4 categories. It should be noted that the water quality results for the bathing season so far this summer have been extremely good with Silecroft and Seascale's samples to date achieving the higher guideline quality at each sampling.
- 3.2 Considering the facilities available at and close to Copeland's beaches and with knowledge of the activities that take place thereon, three of Copeland's

beaches, St Bees, Seascale and Haverigg appear to fit the description of the Bucket and Spade Category at para 2.1 a above, while Silecroft fits the description of the Away From it All beach 2.1 d above.

- 3.3 It should be noted that, whilst with fewer requirements it is easier to achieve the Away From it All and Relaxed Recreation categories of the award, beaches achieving this award must not be promoted as a bathing beach. This would mean that if an application was to be made for this category of award, guesthouses, caravan parks etc, local to that beach would have to agree not to promote the beach in their literature as a bathing beach. Any such decision therefore would have to involve all stakeholders.

- 3.4 The water quality requirements are summarised in the following table.

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Away From It All</b>	<b>Relaxed Recreation</b>	<b>Bucket and Spade</b>	<b>Fun In The Sea</b>
Guideline Water Quality				Required
Mandatory Water Quality			Required	

- 3.3 There are a number of other issues that would have to be resolved before an application can be made. The following table shows the general issues that need to be addressed prior to an application being made:-

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Away From It All</b>	<b>Relaxed Recreation</b>	<b>Bucket and Spade</b>	<b>Fun In The Sea</b>
<p>Management Plan</p> <p>This will require involvement of stakeholders in the applications process and although not specifically required Encams suggest that a Management Committee is set up for each beach. The Encams officer that visited Copeland stated they would expect private sector involvement through for example operators of caravan sites adjacent to beaches to be involved in such committees. Applications are not expected to be made by beach operators in isolation and where a beach is within a National</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓

<p>Park, an area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA), a Special Conservation Area (SAC), part of a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), or on a stretch of Heritage coast evidence of management plans showing how designated features will be protected, managed etc. must be provided.</p> <p>Visitor numbers to each beach must be monitored and information provided with any application.</p>				
<p>Dog Ban/Enforcement of Dog Ban</p> <p>A dog ban or dog control order would have to be in place and evidence of it being enforced provided with the application. Encams have suggested a degree of flexibility on this issue in that the beach could be sectioned off with part being restricted for dogs. They would expect however the restricted area to be clearly identifiable with good signage and the beach actively managed. Their view is that you can't simply put up notices and do nothing, people disobeying the rules must expect action to be taken. It is estimated that the revenue implications of this would be approximately £22,000 in addition to officer time to develop and implement the dog ban/control. New bye-laws would be needed to implement this.</p>	x	x	✓	✓
<p>Signage showing man made or natural discharge points, including streams and water quality information of such water as it may differ from bathing water</p>	x	x	✓	✓
<p>Dogs to be kept on leads</p>	x	x	✓	✓
<p>Access to beach for wheelchairs, prams etc.</p>	x	✓	✓	✓

Access for wheelchairs, prams and pushchairs must meet DDA standards. Although ramps are available at all 3 beaches the Encams officer questioned whether the incline at Seascale and St Bees the two beaches visited on 2 July meets the required standards. Any work required would obviously have a financial impact though the implication of this is not currently known.				
Disabled parking	x	✓	✓	✓
Beach kept clear of litter, refuse & dog fouling all year round Car parks, promenades etc. kept clear all year round  Beaches and seafront areas of hard-standing such as car parks and promenades must be monitored and kept clear of litter, refuse and dog fouling at all times of the year and evidence of the appropriate cleansing regime must be provided at the time of application. It is estimated that the additional cost of cleaning throughout the year is approximately £26,000.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Risk assessments and details of public rescue equipment must be provided with all applications.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Source of fresh drinking water	x	x	✓	✓

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the table above that even the lowest category of award requires a greater commitment in terms of both financial and human resources than have previously gone into the Seaside Awards. The Seaside Awards were in effect a very minor part of the Council's Waste Management sections activities, being fitted into the time available between other higher priority work. At the present time resources even for the lowest category of award are not available assuming the Award is relevant to the Waste section. If an application is to be progressed members may want to consider which Department of the Council should deal with it.

Members are asked to consider the different categories of award and their applicability to Copeland's beaches., noting that Silecroft beach is eligible to apply for only the Relaxed Recreation and Away From It All categories while St Bees and Seascale are potentially eligible to apply for 3 of the 4 categories.

Executive is recommended to seek to progress Quality Beach Awards only where there are local commitments to support the application process and an external partner organisation is prepared to provide financial support to meet the requirements of gaining and maintaining the awards.

## **5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)**

In addition to the fee of £350 per application, significant human and financial resources will be required if the Executive wish to pursue the Quality Coast Awards. The funding for this award could not be covered within existing budgets.

## **6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN**

There is no direct link to the corporate plan.

**List of Appendices -None**

**List of Background Documents:** Background papers on the award are available on the Quality Coast Award Website at [www.qcaguide.co.uk](http://www.qcaguide.co.uk)

**List of Consultees:** Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder, Corporate Team

## **CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES**

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	If pursued some elements of environment crime, dog fouling would be addressed
Impact on Sustainability	May support sustainability issues
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	Risk assessments would be required for use of the beaches under the award criteria
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	None

Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None