

QUALITY COAST WORKING GROUP – REPORT BACK

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

Summary and Recommendation:

This report outlines the work of the Quality Coast Working Group and makes a series of recommendations in relation to the Group's original terms of reference.

It is recommended that:

- a) Executive determine whether or not achievement of Quality Coast Awards should be included in the 2007 – 2012 Corporate Plan as part of the current refresh process.
- b) If Quality Coast Awards are to be included in the Corporate Plan that they be pursued only where there is sufficient local support to form an effective management committee and where external funding can be secured to cover the full additional cost of gaining the award.
- c) Corporate team are asked to determine the most appropriate section to lead on the awards into the future.
- d) The timescales for achieving awards being in excess of 18 months be noted (with the possible exception of Silecroft which is suitable to apply for the "Away from it all" category of award)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Executive on 7 August 2007 received a report on the new Quality Coast Awards scheme. This scheme replaced the former yellow and blue flag beach awards and is far more onerous in its requirements such that the number of award beaches had fallen significantly across the Country, with only one in the whole North West Region and none in Cornwall.
- 1.2 After consideration of the report Executive established the Quality Coast Award Working Group with the following terms of reference:
 - a) To consider whether applications for Quality Coast Awards are appropriate in the context of the Council's other agreed priorities in the 5 year Corporate Plan.

b) To consider and agree potential partners to work with the Council in assessing the viability of applying for Quality Coast Awards for Copeland's amenity beaches, including parish and private and voluntary sector representatives.

c) To explore all possible sources of external funding to finance applications for Quality Coast Awards, including costs of preparing and processing applications, establishment and implementation of management plans, dog control implementation and enforcement, signage and access improvements, and ongoing revenue costs of additional cleansing requirements.

d) To consider and agree timescales for applying for Quality Coast Awards that are practical and achievable.

e) To make recommendations to the Executive on a – d above.

1.3 The Working Group consists of Councillors N Clarkson, G Clements (Chair), E Eastwood, J Park, D Wilson. The Group met on 5 occasions during August to November 2007 including a site visit to all the amenity beaches with a representative of ENCAMS the national organising body.

1.4 The ENCAMS officer after visiting all 4 amenity beaches concluded that St Bees, Seascale and Haverigg beaches have the potential to achieve the highest level award whilst Silecroft could only achieve the lowest level award. There are however a significant number of actions to be completed before an application can be made and although there are some common requirements across all 4 beaches there are also specific requirements particularly in respect of infrastructure for each beach.

2 RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 A review of the Corporate Plan was undertaken to determine the level of prioritisation of the awards to the Council. The outcome of this exercise being that there are no direct links between the current Corporate Plan and Quality Coast Awards. In this context the Group wished for the Executive to review policies in the Corporate Plan insofar as they impact on coastal areas.

2.2 A number of letters were sent to individuals and organisations who might be prepared to support a local management committee for the beaches. The response to this has been poor with only 4 responses in total, 2 for St Bees and 2 for Haverigg, although it is understood from Councillor Eastwood that support can be taken for granted from Seascale Parish Council. Clearly from this it can be seen there is a limited amount of enthusiasm at a local level in supporting the Quality Coast Awards.

2.3 It is difficult to define exactly how much would be needed as one off and longer terms funding to achieve the awards for each beach. At Silecroft if

the lowest level of award is sought costs are likely to be negligible whereas at Seascale and St Bees where a higher level of award and greater infrastructure and running costs would be necessary in the order of £100k is likely to be needed. The greatest cost is likely to be at Haverigg if the higher level of award was to be sought where significant infrastructure improvement would be necessary to ensure disabled access from the car park to the beach. In addition the process of application, running management committees and project managing infrastructure improvements is greater than the Council's existing resources can accommodate. Therefore it is suggested that there is a need for a Quality Coast Project officer to be appointed at a cost of £40,000 for an 18 month period. Letters asking for support and financial commitment have been sent to BNG and UU however no response has yet been received.

- 2.3 Arising from the information made available to the group it is apparent that the timescales to achieve a quality coast award will be protracted, with the possible exception of Silecroft where dog byelaws are not required. For the other three beaches it would be prudent to allow 18 months to 2 years as a lead in period to the achievement of an award.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 Executive can elect not to include the Quality Coast Awards in the Corporate Plan. While it is felt achievement of the awards has helped support tourism marketing and ensured that environmental standards are maintained above required standards, there is little evidence to suggest any direct link between tourism and the former yellow flag awards.
- 3.2 Executive can elect to include the Awards in the Corporate Plan but with the condition they will only be pursued if there is both significant local support and external funding to cover all additional costs.
- 3.3 Executive can determine to pursue the awards at the Council's cost. It is estimated to do so would in the first instance require £40k for a project officer, £100k one off infrastructure improvements, £22k to develop and implement the dog ban/control bye-laws and £26k revenue costs for additional beach cleaning.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In conclusion members are asked to consider whether the benefits of achieving the Quality Coast Award outweigh the additional resources that are required to apply for them.

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

An additional resource at a cost of approximately £27k per annum will be required should members choose to pursue the awards.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

Quality Coast Awards are not in the 2007 – 2012 Corporate Plan. If Executive agrees achievement of the Quality Coast Awards will need to be included in the plan as part of the current refresh process.

List of Appendices

List of Background Documents: Notes of the Quality Coast Working Group Meetings.

List of Consultees:

Corporate Team, Deputy Leader Councillor George Clements

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	None
Impact on Sustainability	None
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	None
Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None
Section 151 Officer Comments	None
Monitoring Officer Comments	No comments