

Call for Evidence Summary Sheet
Skegness Town Council.

- 1.** Infrastructure, poor road and rail networks, seasonal and low paid jobs, difficult to attract skilled professionals like Drs, underfunding and centralisation of health services, housing stock and inability to build, tidal flooding.
- 2.** No, lack of robust analysis of the economic and social health and vitality of seaside towns.
- 3.** Consultation suggest the town is affected by the nature of its housing stock. Perception that an increase in HMO's results in a drop-in housing value and an increase in anti-social behaviour, although there is a lack of evidence for this.
- 4.** Yes. Extra pressure is put on road, rail, education and health services.
- 5.** Yes, poor transport networks present a barrier to economic growth and commuting.
- 6.** Tourism is essential to the town, initiatives have not been that successful or are in their infancy.
- 7.** Better working partnerships between authorities and support to Town and Parishes to attract funding is needed to encourage further regeneration.
- 8.** This Councils ambition is to take on more responsibility for areas using powers under the Localism Act. Barriers need removing.
- 9.** Business needs support with training and developing year-round trade and an infrastructure to support this.
- 10.** Skegness lacks higher and further education provision.
- 11.** Deprivation contributes to levels of poor health in the area.
- 12.** CCF funding is needed in Skegness, the benefit to other areas like Cleethorpes has been evident.
- 13.** A cohesive and supported vision is difficult to achieve.
- 14.** Business Rate Relief, grant funding, VAT relief for tourism related goods and services.
- 15.** Local people and communities should play as big a role as possible but need support.
- 16.** Cornwall appears to have created an environment where Local Councils work closely with authorities and have been successful in attracting EU funding.

Call for Evidence – Regenerating Seaside Towns
Response from Skegness Town Council

1. Infrastructure – Limited 180-degree access leading to traffic problems in the centre and entry roads, managing the holiday traffic in Skegness is difficult due to the poor road network and condition of the roads. Lincolnshire does not have a motorway and is dominated by single carriageway trunk road and minor roads.

Seasonal/low paid and unskilled jobs to service the tourist industry. The lack of further education institutions and skilled year-round employment means the town loses valuable talent. The dependency on benefits influences the local tax base meaning that the locally funded cost of Councils is less fairly distributed than in affluent areas.

Difficult to attract skilled persons, professionals and Doctors to the area. Local GP surgeries, the local urgent care centre and nearest hospital have all reported this as an issue. Additional strain on medical services in summer months due to the large influx of tourists and temporary residents, without this being factored within funding calculations, puts an additional strain on these under resourced services.

Underfunding of local hospital trusts and the centralisation of specialist services into Lincoln which is a minimum of one hour away over poor roads, is a threat to health. This is exacerbated due to the local population having a higher proportion of elderly retired and poorer families who are more likely to have chronic medical conditions requiring frequent hospital treatment and do not have access to a car. The influx of tourists during the summer increases demand for A&E services.

Housing Stock and inability to build – high number of small B&B's and small hotels for sale, a perceived increase in the number of HMO's, lack of affordable, starter and retirement homes. Due to flood zone and existing unused permissions the local plan does not support any further housing development. Existing permissions are held by two building companies. Housing classified as affordable generally isn't for those on low pay.

Tidal Flooding – Skegness is at significant risk from tidal flooding with existing sea defence life being reduced by rising sea levels caused by global warming.

It is believed by this Council that these challenges are common to other seaside towns and that they have persisted over many years and are getting progressively worse.

2. No, this Council believes there is a lack of robust analysis of the economic and social health and vitality of seaside towns. The majority of research conducted for this area covers the whole of East Lindsey which is a large area consisting of affluent towns and countryside villages, along with more deprived areas consisting of declining market towns and the coastal strip. This Council when completing a major funding application could find little research specifically on Skegness or surrounding coastal towns and finds that a lot of the research available is out of date. Grant funders want to see this research as evidence of need and in its absence applications are more likely to be declined, frustrating potential investment.

This Town Council wrote to the local planning inspectors in January 2018 regarding the evidence base for the local plan with concern that the evidence base is out of date or lacking and that the plan itself was not robust enough and lacked ambition and strategic thinking.

Consultation for the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), identified the following areas where further evidence is required:

- Evidence on number of HMOs within the town and their perceived expansion
- Local heritage listings
- Need for further health care facilities
- Provision for utilities to increase capacity for the town, in particular water.
- Evidence which considers the demand for a commercial leisure destination; demand locally and interest from the market.
- Flood risk, further detail to identify how flood risk can be mitigated in areas which could come forward for new development
- Alternative methods to increase the delivery of affordable housing
- Local housing need survey, in particular assessing affordable housing needs
- The need for a Western Relief Road (A52 to A158)
- The need for higher education facilities and interest in the education sector to expand provision into Skegness
- Market sector analysis of economy
- Demand for and impact of caravan parks on Skegness

3. Public consultation suggests that the town is affected by the nature of its housing stock and that it is not providing suitable and affordable accommodation, there is a perception that an increase in HMO's results in a drop of housing value and an increase in anti-social behaviour. It is not possible to evidence this due to the lack of research around these issues. Tighter controls within government planning policy could help to address this and prevent developers from holding planning permissions and not building.

4. Yes, extra pressure is put on the town's road and rail network, education and health services, there are a high number of temporary residents that do not seem to be taken into account when funding decisions are made. It is suspected that there is a considerable "off radar" residency, with people living on non-residential caravan parks for most of the year and then moving into B&B accommodation when parks are closed.

Skegness Town Council supports the fairer funding campaign for Lincolnshire.

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/a-fairer-funding-deal-for-lincolnshire/131671.article>

5. Yes, poor transport networks present a barrier for economic growth and commuting. Investment in the road and rail infrastructure is needed to promote industry growth and create skilled employment opportunities. The NDP Steering group suggested a transport hub is needed to promote investment, economic development and job opportunities.

Digital connectivity is acceptable in major centers of population, but much of the coastal strip and adjacent hinterland comprises small villages and hamlets which either have no coverage or very poor coverage unsuitable to support businesses increasingly reliant on an on-line presence. The cost of providing traditional infrastructure to these areas is not economically justifiable for the digital suppliers. Therefore, universal connectivity will need to be either supported by government funding or there will need to be legislative changes to force infrastructure providers to install in non-profitable areas.

6. Skegness Town Council has had an unsuccessful Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) application but has witnessed the positive impact on other coastal Towns where CCF funding and other funding streams have been forthcoming. Tourism is essential to the town and some success in extending the season has been seen through the Lincolnshire Coastal Destination Business Improvement District although this is still in its infancy.

The Council does not believe that enough attention is being given to the potential contribution that could be made by other sectors and would welcome any support and investment to explore

this and diversify the offer of Seaside towns. Better working partnerships between authorities and support to Town and Parishes to attract locally targeted funding is needed for further regeneration.

7. Better working partnerships between authorities and support to Town and Parishes to attract funding is needed to encourage further regeneration. A lack of officer resource in County and District authorities, due to funding pressures, is resulting in less engagement with Town and Parish Councils who understand local needs. Asset transfer needs to be made easier with national guidelines and assistance for Town and Parish Councils, rather than this being developed ad-hoc, inconsistently and as a result at a higher cost.

8. Skegness Town Council's (STC) Business Plan theme is "**Taking Control Taking Responsibility**". This refers to the Council's ambition to step up, using the powers under the Localism Act to take more responsibility for those areas important to the residents of Skegness and to the local community. This Council has already taken on the responsibility for cutting more than 130,000 m² of grass verges and is in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Council is also working on a project to regenerate the center of the Town by replacing the derelict Pavilion building in Tower Gardens and take over the management of the gardens and other assets in the Town to improve the area.

The Environment Agency is sometimes seen as a block to economic development in the area, the government needs to review its coastal defence strategy to ensure it supports sustainable growth. Further government investment and support from relevant organisations is needed as a catalyst to deliver and build on these initiatives, attract further investment and to make the most of the local capacity and energy to drive change.

9. Business need support with training and developing year-round trade, they also need confidence that any investments will be fruitful in delivering a satisfactory return. As previously identified many businesses need supportive infrastructure whether transport or digital to consider investing in non-tourism industries. In the retail sector, high rents and business rates are crippling many remaining retail businesses. Changes in regulation to encourage lower business rents and to discourage landlords from leaving premises empty could help develop new high street offerings. Government should also consider the change in the retail habits of shoppers and whether business rate levels should be adjusted to create a more level playing field between on-line and traditional retailers.

10. Skegness lacks higher and further education provision. Education levels of the permanent resident population is low. Positive change would be promoted by providing higher and further education opportunities for example a specialist leisure training facility or national training academy.

11. Skegness is a popular resort for people to retire to. People with health and mobility issues are attracted to the area due to the sea air and flat terrain. Skegness has deprived areas and due to this sees a higher prevalence in smoking rates and related diseases, along with mental health and wellbeing issues and addictions. Targeted interventions to promote education and aspirations, health and wellbeing and addiction recovery, along with initiatives to reduce social isolation would help to address these issues. However, the underlying issues will only be permanently tackled by raising aspirations, income levels and education.

12. CCF funding is desperately needed in Skegness, improvements can be seen in other towns that have had significant CCF and other funding which then in turn creates a confidence in the area which attracts further investment. Skegness Town Council had an unsuccessful £3.7 million CCF bid in 2017. There is an impression that once external funding is initially obtained it is easier to attract further funding as track record has been established and all the supporting

background evidence for applications is in situ. Further targeted interventions and funding from the Government is desperately needed in Skegness to tackle the issues it faces.

13. A cohesive and supported vision is difficult to achieve. There is no single corporate entity responsible and held accountable. Skegness Town Council is developing its own Neighbourhood Development Plan and has its own Business Plan. The LCDIB has a vision for the coastal strip. ELDC has a vision for East Lindsey. LCC has a vision for Lincolnshire. The Local Enterprise Partnership has a regional view and many other organisations have their own plans and strategies. However, these don't necessarily support each other and whilst they all might include Skegness the vast majority are not specific to the Town. Wider ranged plans are watered down by County or Regional priorities which tend to focus on major towns and cities. Further work is needed to develop a long-term cohesive vision that is supported by all authorities and organisations in the area. Government should support this by ensuring there is a duty to undertake this work and should provide authorities with the necessary resources to engage and support their local councils more robustly and effectively.

14. Business Rate relief or revaluation to reflect the rapidly changing retail sector. Grant funding to recognise the disproportionate impact high levels of Council Tax benefit has on local council funding. VAT relief for tourism related goods and services could be provided along with other incentives to attract investment and economic development.

15. Local people and communities should play as big a role as possible but need support, due to the deprivation in the area whilst there is a willingness there is sometimes a lack of knowledge, skill and expertise to successfully get projects off the ground and make successful funding applications. Town and Parish Councils are uniquely placed to work towards regeneration of seaside towns but need the resources to support this that does not place further burden on the deprived area. Specific grants available over a 3 to 5 year period could provide the necessary seeding to get groups established, mobilised and sustainable. Improved engagement, support, capacity and resource is needed for authorities to successfully work together on projects, plans and visions that are collaborated on right from the start.

16. Cornwall seems to have created an environment where Local Councils work closely with other authorities with a shift in local service delivery and have been successful in attracting EU funding. There has been considerable support from Cornwall Council and what appears at least from outside, to be a close working relationship. Cornwall appears to have been successful in attracting grant funding for development both for initial schemes and subsequently for successive additional developments. Funding is needed in this area to put the necessary resources and networks in place to enable the area to attract larger scale funding.

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