

Strategy for seaside success: Securing the future of seaside economies



Broadstairs

A tall, white, sail-shaped tower (Spinnaker Tower) stands prominently in the background, overlooking a harbor. The tower has a distinctive curved, ribbed structure. In the foreground, several boats are docked at a pier, and a modern building with a glass facade and white structural elements is visible. The sky is clear and blue.

We want to ensure
our seaside towns
strengthen their
appeal as great
places to live,
work and visit in
the 21st century

Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth

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Foreword

Seaside resorts play a unique role in our history, heritage and culture: from the international reputation of iconic landmarks such as Blackpool Tower to the national contribution that seaside tourism makes to our economy. At a much more personal level, many of us have fond and evocative memories of fish and chips, buckets and spades, and Punch and Judy: trips to the seaside continue to be an integral part of family life in this country.

But with the rise of package holidays and low cost airfares making foreign travel much more accessible and affordable, many of our seaside towns struggled to compete. The legacy of that decline has been disproportionate levels of worklessness, lower wages and lower levels of skills.

Some seaside towns have overcome these difficulties, reinventing themselves and investing not only in making themselves attractive locations to visit, but also great places to live and work. And there is an opportunity for seaside towns to capitalise on the growing trend for people to holiday closer to home – both to save money and to be environmentally aware.

This strategy sets out how the Government will support all our seaside towns to reach the standard of the best. A £5m fund will help transform some of the most deprived seaside towns by creating jobs, supporting businesses, and improving skills. It outlines the priorities for improvement: driving economic development, improving housing quality, and strengthening the way that public bodies work together to deliver for residents. It shows how we will tackle the specific problems that some seaside towns face: such as pockets of anti-social behaviour and derelict properties. And it describes how seaside towns can not only draw on their existing assets – such as their historic infrastructure – but also the emerging green industries, harnessing wind and wave power.

This has to be a partnership approach, driven by the towns themselves; and the strategy outlines the different roles and responsibilities that central and local government must make.

Seaside towns like Scarborough, St Ives, Weymouth and Torbay are some of the most thriving and vibrant towns in the whole country, with strong local leadership, dynamic businesses, and distinct attributes – whether food, entertainment, sport, the arts or the natural environment. They are no longer dependent on the unreliable weather, but attract visitors all year round. There is no reason why our other seaside towns could not flourish in the same way. This strategy sets out how we will make that happen.



A handwritten signature of Gordon Brown in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Gordon Brown, MP
Prime Minister



A handwritten signature of John Denham in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon John Denham, MP
*Secretary of State for Communities and Local
Government*

Executive summary

This strategy sets out our vision for seaside towns, describes the challenges they face and outlines how the Government will work with them to support their future development.

The aim of this strategy is to ensure seaside towns have the support they need to build on their heritage and take advantage of new opportunities to develop strong economies and communities for the future. While many have had to confront particular economic challenges, seaside towns have unique histories and retain a special place in the development of modern Britain.

However, a renewed interest in these places and their heritage, coupled with new possibilities to develop and use low carbon economies and online services, provides an excellent opportunity for these seaside towns to become great places to live and work as well as visit.

We have given councils stronger powers to address their own problems locally, through devolution, while the Regional Development Agencies provide them with significant support to promote economic development. For example, by March 2010 the North West Development Agency will have invested over £200m in coastal towns. And councils in two coastal areas, Fylde Coast and Merseyside, have all signed up to single development plans called Multi-Area Agreements. They also benefit from significant financial support. Heritage Lottery Funding has given over £234m to 864 projects in English coastal resorts since 1997. Money from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and New Deal for Communities has also targeted 21 coastal authorities.

In addition, many seaside towns have already proven they can transform high seasonal unemployment to year round thriving businesses. In 2009 Scarborough won the most enterprising town in Europe award and Lowestoft was named most enterprising town in Britain.

All the work set out is based around three principles:

- ~ all seaside towns are unique places with distinctive needs, there is no 'one size fits all' solution
- ~ but they do share some common attributes, and government intervention should be 'seaside proofed' to take account of the distinctive needs and circumstances of seaside communities
- ~ as always, public sector bodies are most effective when they work together to prioritise how action is targeted and money spent.

The package of support outlined in this strategy is:

Tackling worklessness and supporting economic development:

- ~ A new **seaside town grant initiative fund of £5m** to help the most deprived seaside authorities
- ~ Extend the **Sea Change Programme** to help improve seaside infrastructure after 2011 subject to future review of spending priorities
- ~ Encourage regional authorities to explicitly address the economic challenges of seaside towns in the new **single regional strategies**
- ~ Encourage seaside authorities to exploit their natural and locational advantages and be in the forefront of the shift to a **low carbon economy**, including a focus on green skills, training and jobs, to diversify their economies. This includes:
 - ~ New UK offshore wind farm licences worth up to £75bn which could create 70,000 new jobs, many of which would be in coastal areas, by 2020.
 - ~ Interest free energy efficiency and renewable energy loans to help small businesses buy energy saving equipment.
- ~ **Heritage Lottery Fund** to look at how more support can be given for iconic piers which are a unique part of a seaside's historic infrastructure
- ~ Support for a **'Seasiding' campaign** with festivals to attract cultural investors and strengthen non-seasonal economies to help them become year round visitor destinations
- ~ **Regional Development Agencies and Tourism Boards** to give maximum promotion to seaside towns in their region

Improving housing quality:

- ~ **New licensing rules for councils for houses in multiple occupation** will help tackle problems around low quality seaside housing
- ~ Look at additional measures associated with **holiday site caravan licensing** and unsuitable residential landlords getting caravan site licences
- ~ Power to jumpstart bringing derelict properties and vacant coastal land back into use quickly through new **'Meanwhile Leases'**

Strengthen public sector support and service delivery:

- ~ **Focus on stronger cooperation across government** to improve regeneration outcomes. In particular making sure that pockets of deprivation in otherwise prosperous areas are not missing out on essential funding

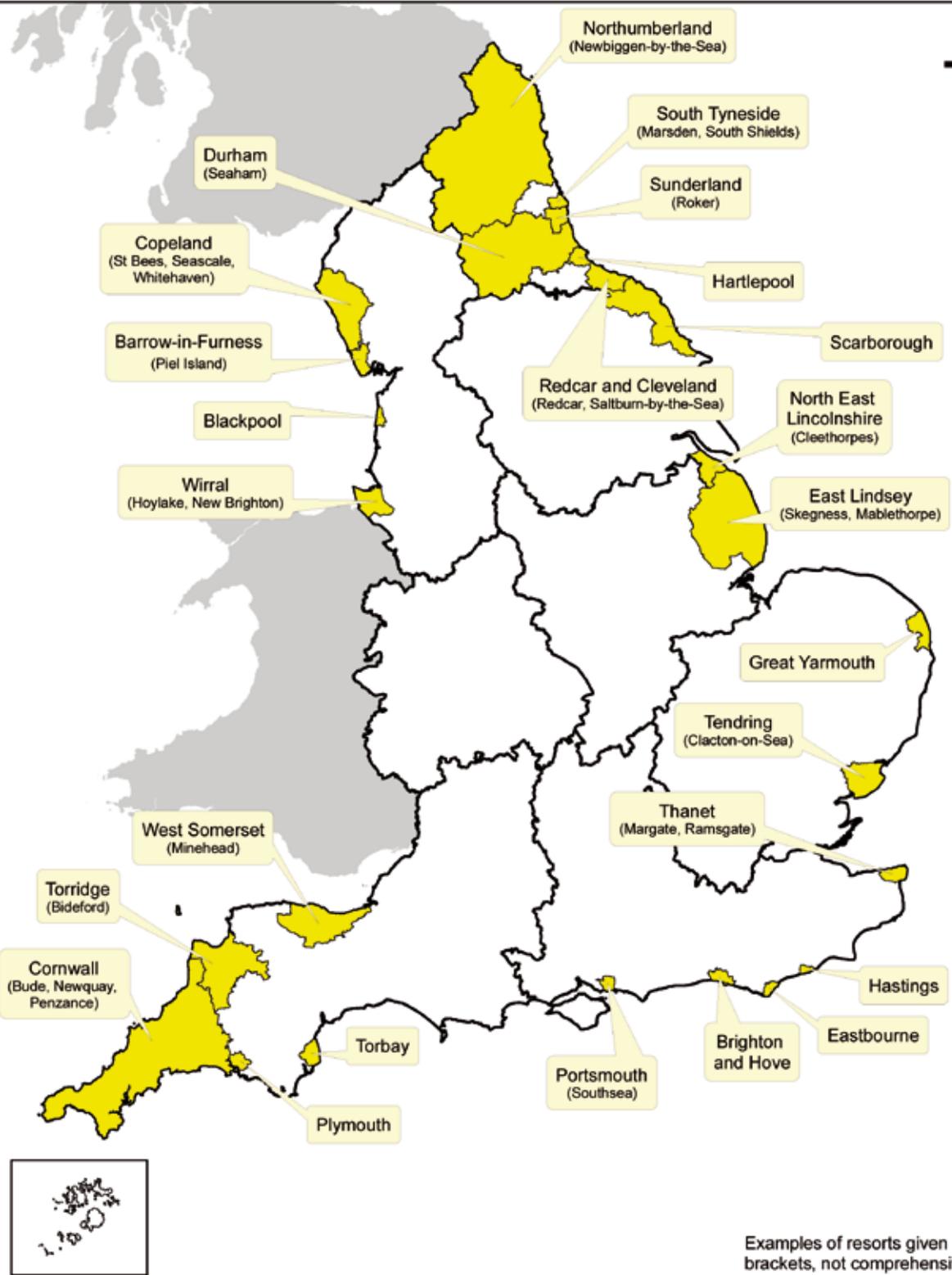
- ~ Ask **Regional Ministers** to champion their seaside towns at the local, regional and national level
- ~ Support the use of innovation and best practice in developing **online and digital public services** to ensure citizens in seaside towns have access to high quality, personalised public services
- ~ **Neighbourhood policing** will help tackle local concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime in seaside towns. Three coastal areas have been chosen to develop Neighbourhood Agreements, covering local standards of service and priorities for action – Portsmouth, Newquay and Berwick.



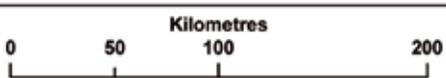
Brighton



Seaside local authorities eligible for Seaside Town Grant



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 Ordnance Survey Licence number 100018986 2010 03 0016



Data Sources:
 OS Boundary Line
 NOMIS
 IMD 2007

What is our vision for seaside towns?

The Government recognises that seaside towns, along with other places, have a distinctive and unique role to play in the national, regional and sub-regional economy. We want to enable all places to create and share prosperity and to enjoy a higher quality of life, with the direct engagement of local people.

Historically, seaside towns developed from a desire to improve people's health, well being and opportunities for pleasure. As a legacy of this they benefit from some common opportunities:

- ~ strong liveability and high quality public realm
- ~ strong entertainment and leisure offer
- ~ high quality owner-occupied housing in attractive locations.

We want to ensure seaside towns make the most of these opportunities and strengthen their appeal as great places to live, work and visit in the 21st century. They should build on the best of the past while embracing new opportunities made available through the shift towards a low carbon, digital society. We believe these measures will benefit both visitors and residents to seaside towns.

Why do we need a strategy for seaside towns?

We live in an age of expanding opportunity and people rightly have high expectations of the places they live in and visit. Many seaside towns have experienced economic challenges as a result of changing patterns of tourism.

A 2008 benchmarking study of the 37 largest seaside towns in England concluded that, taking account of a range of socio-economic indicators, larger seaside towns are, on average, more disadvantaged than England as a whole. Worklessness among seaside town residents remains a particular challenge.

As a consequence, seaside towns often share some common characteristics which present particular challenges for their regeneration and socio-economic development:

- ~ disproportionate levels of worklessness, with associated poor health
- ~ reliance on a declining tourist trade and other low wage, low skill and sometimes seasonal employment sectors

- ~ an imbalance in seaside labour markets with low representation of jobs in economic growth sectors (professional and financial services, the knowledge economy)
- ~ a polarisation in the quality of local housing between highly desirable owner-occupied property, and often poor quality private rented accommodation (including high concentrations of caravans in some areas)
- ~ peripheral location (both in terms of road, rail and digital links)
- ~ demography (particularly ageing and transient populations)

Existing activity to support seaside towns

The Government's mainstream policies are designed to ensure that all places and communities receive high quality public services to support their development. In addition, seaside towns benefit from targeted support, for example through the Sea Change programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Seaside towns, like other places, vary considerably. Greater devolution and practical measures such as Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs) are enabling local public sector providers to work together to develop tailored solutions to meet local needs and challenges effectively. Eight of the 15 MAAs signed since 2008 include coastal local authorities. MAAs offer a way of helping local councils to work more closely with key partners, including the private and third sectors, and with neighbouring authorities to promote economic development at a sub-regional level.

Examples of seaside MAAs:

The **Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole partnership** (incorporating Bournemouth, Purbeck and Weymouth seaside authorities), is focusing on improving skills levels, transport and sustainable growth.

The **Fylde Coast** (Blackpool, Wyre, Fylde and Lancashire County Council) is currently developing an MAA, with a key focus on improving 'coastal infrastructure and the public realm'. The partnership is seeking to breathe new life into coastal areas through investment in heritage and cultural assets.

The Government established the Regional Development Agencies to bring a more local focus to regeneration and economic development issues. All coastal RDAs have Regional Economic Strategies that take account of coastal and seaside towns. For example:

- ~ The **Yorkshire and Humberside RDA (Yorkshire Forward)** strategy includes a renaissance towns programme that involving several seaside towns including Bridlington and Scarborough.
- ~ The **South West RDA (SWRDA)** has supported seaside towns in the region through a Market and Coastal Towns Initiative.

- ~ The **North West Development Agency (NWDA)** up to March 2010 will have invested over £200m in its coastal towns.
- ~ The **East of England Development Agency (EEDA)** has invested over £86m in coastal areas in its region including the resorts of Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Southend.

The **South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)** is committed to lifting underperformance through regeneration programmes in the seaside resorts of Hastings, Margate and Dover. Its '**Diamonds for Investment and Growth**' strategy includes Brighton and the South Hampshire Coast. This has identified six priority sectors through which to deliver new jobs and build on existing regional strengths including the Advanced Engineering and Marine sector, with a coastal spatial focus.

As the role of regional ministers develops, RDAs will continue to have an important role in working with them to support regional and sub-regional activity that will help the development of seaside towns.

Local authorities and their partners will need to continue to involve local people and communities in developing strategies and plans for their areas.

Seaside towns have already proved it is possible to transform themselves from places with high seasonal unemployment into thriving centres of year round business enterprise and growth:

- ~ Scarborough won the most enterprising town in Britain award in 2008 and the most enterprising town in Europe award in 2009.
- ~ Lowestoft was chosen as the most enterprising town in Britain in 2009, having helped over 5,000 new business start-ups and having created over 10,000 jobs since 1982.

The **Scarborough Renaissance Partnership** – a coalition of local businesses, residents and council staff – has transformed the seaside town into a shining example of enterprise achievement, stamping out seasonal unemployment, creating new industry sectors and attracting more than £200m of private sector investment along with hundreds of new jobs. It reduced economic dependence on tourism and fishing, capitalised on the physical regeneration of the harbourside, kick-started a boom in business start-ups and introduced Freebay wifi along the coast, making the internet accessible to all.

What more can the Government do to help seaside towns?

Many of the challenges facing our seaside towns are complex and will take time to address. The development of a seaside town strategy provides the opportunity to bring together cross-government efforts and develop an holistic approach to addressing their varied needs.

It is critical that any new or joined up support is sustainable and aimed at generating long term prosperity and opportunity in these communities. Our priority must be to ensure

mainstream service providers understand and consider the needs of seaside towns and address these effectively on an on-going basis.

In addition, in the shorter term we want to accelerate growth and an understanding of the specific issues seaside towns face. We are proposing a package of measures to boost these places and provide an opportunity to experiment and share their learning.

A range of policy actions and opportunities are set out below.

What more could we do through mainstream policies and funding?

The way in which national policy is developed and funding is distributed does not always take account of the needs and circumstances of seaside communities.

Governance and coordination

At the national and regional level, stronger direction and support might promote a more joined up approach on cross-cutting issues affecting seaside towns.



At the local level, a cross-agency approach will play an important role in maximising the potential from the public sector, building on the lessons of the Total Place pilots launched at Budget 2009. This is about delivering better public services at less cost, through a 'whole area' approach to public services in a geographical area. The aim is to understand how different public sector organisations in a place can work together to drive both savings and better outcomes. The approach places responsibility for funding decisions at the local level and allows frontline organisations to take strategic local spending decisions by combining resources effectively to meet local priorities and needs.

Actions:

- ~ Cabinet sub-committee on seaside towns to consider how government policies impact on seaside towns and regularly review implementation
- ~ Regional Ministers to review seaside town issues in their regions, and report back regularly to Cabinet sub-committee, focusing in particular on the coordination of strategy and funding formulae as they affect seaside towns
- ~ A strengthened Cross Departmental Working Group on coastal towns to provide Secretariat for Cabinet sub-committee, in addition to supporting more coordinated action across Whitehall on coastal towns
- ~ Promote a cross-agency approach in seaside towns (building on the Total Place pilots) to prioritise integrated and cost effective interventions in order to address the key challenges they face, and better design and delivery of public services
- ~ Consider how we might ensure seaside towns can benefit fully from key government strategies/policy initiatives, checking they take account of the needs and circumstances of seaside communities

Funding

All local authorities in England, including those with seaside towns, receive Formula Grant which provides support for a wide range of core local authority services, other than housing. In distributing Formula Grant to local authorities, the grant distribution system takes account of the relative need of each authority to provide services in an area, and its relative potential to raise income through Council Tax, relative to all other authorities providing the same services. There is also a mechanism to ensure all authorities receive at least the minimum percentage change in grant from year to year, on a like for like basis.

There are concerns that the current funding formula does not directly reflect either day visitors, other than commuters, or people staying overnight. In addition, it does not explicitly take into account transient populations. This can have an impact on the services that the funding allows for, such as police numbers, and on provision of these services at local authority level.

Discussions with local authorities on potential changes to the indicators used in the needs formula – which could be introduced in the 2011-12 local government finance settlement later this year – are underway through the Settlement Working Group and the Police Allocation Finance Working Group.

In addition to mainstream funding mechanisms, the Government also provides money to test new approaches to tackle issues of local concern such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime in seaside towns and elsewhere.

The “Safe and Confident Neighbourhoods” Strategy launched in March 2010, for example, builds on the success of neighbourhood policing by ensuring police and local social services work together to tackle ASB, boost local confidence and make it easier for the public to play its part in keeping neighbourhoods safe. The 12 national Pathfinder Areas chosen to develop Neighbourhood Agreements, covering local standards of service and priorities for action, include three coastal authorities – Portsmouth, Newquay and Berwick. Their experience will provide a valuable learning opportunity for other seaside communities in how to encourage local agencies to work together to deal with ASB and crime issues that matter locally.

Actions:

- ~ Government will work with stakeholders to see whether it is possible to use proxy indicators for day visitors, other indicators of visitor numbers and a measure of population turnover in the relevant needs formula for allocating funds to local authorities.
- ~ Encourage seaside communities to learn from the experience of Neighbourhood Agreement Pathfinder Areas in dealing effectively with crime and anti-social behaviour in their area.

What more could we do through new initiatives?

Seaside towns face a unique combination of challenges, and much has been done to address them. We want to go further and look at how we can deliver improved outcomes and encourage greater understanding of the impact of government activities on coastal communities, contributing to sustainable future regeneration. These initiatives aim to address the key challenges outlined above.

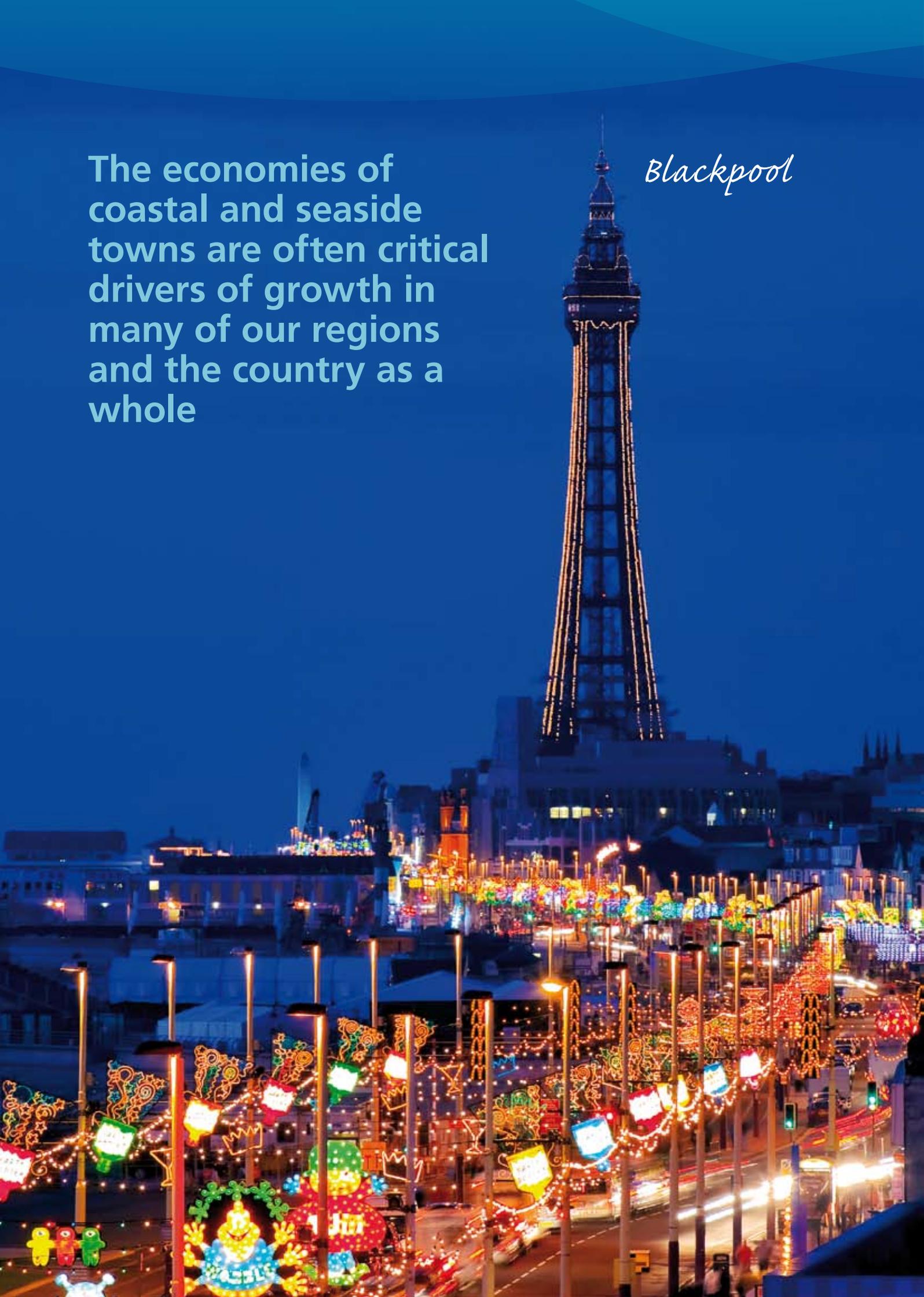
Economic development and worklessness

Evidence shows that the key issues facing seaside towns include:

- ~ *disproportionate levels of worklessness, with associated poor health*
- ~ *an imbalance in seaside labour markets with low representation of jobs in economic growth sectors (professional and financial services, knowledge economy)*
- ~ *reliance on a declining tourist trade and other low-wage, low skill and sometimes seasonal employment sectors*

The economies of coastal and seaside towns are often critical drivers of growth in many of our regions and the country as a whole

Blackpool



Worklessness

The Government has a strategy and policies in place to tackle worklessness, boosting skills and enterprise in the most deprived areas, which include a range of seaside areas.

Local areas have already received significant government support. More than £700m of funding was allocated nationally to projects and programmes through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) and New Deal for Communities in 2008/09. Over £99m of this money went to 21 coastal authorities.

In addition the Future Jobs Fund is enabling local authorities in coastal and other areas, local and regional partnerships, social enterprises and the wider third sector to come up with innovative ideas to create new, additional jobs for young people and those from deprived areas.

The “**Blackpool Build Up**” is an employment and training initiative using both WNF and LEI funding to provide entry level skills for unemployed residents looking for employment in construction and related industries, often working directly on the physical regeneration of Blackpool.

Apprenticeship placements play an important role in providing new skills and training opportunities for young people to help them succeed in a difficult job market in many seaside towns. Blackpool currently has over 500 people in apprenticeship placements and completion rates for apprenticeships have increased to 63 per cent over the past three years of government funding. Bournemouth and Poole College in Dorset supports programme-led apprenticeship schemes, in addition to traditional day and block release, as alternative routes into employment for school leavers. Despite the recession, the college has over 1,200 places for apprentices reflecting the varied needs of the local economy.

Actions:

- ~ We propose to launch a new initiative to support this work, the Seaside Towns Grant initiative, in March 2010.

This funding could be used to provide additional help to tackle disproportionate levels of worklessness and deprivation in priority seaside towns. It would be allocated equally to each eligible district through a one-off un-ringfenced grant. It will allow local authorities to use their local judgement and discretion in the use of funding. However, we will write to the authorities receiving the funding to explain the aims of the funding and the importance of prioritising seaside towns. This will include sharing examples of approaches that are proving to be effective in tackling worklessness and promoting economic regeneration.

The grant will be targeted at the 25 most deprived seaside authorities as measured on the district level summary of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (IMD). The 25 authorities will each receive an equal £200,000 share of the £5m. These authorities are shown at Annex A. The IMD 2007 is a weighted measure of multiple deprivation constituted of seven domains. Forty-five per cent of the IMD is directly driven by the

employment and income domains, which indicate the scale of population on out of work benefits and those vulnerable to income deprivation.

Economic development

The economies of coastal and seaside towns are often critical drivers of growth in many of our regions and the country as a whole. In the Eastern Region, for example, the coastal economy accounts for a high proportion of the region's Gross Value Added (GVA) – contributing an estimated £28bn GVA per year. As with other urban areas, however, there have been large variations in the economic performance of seaside towns in recent years often reflecting trends in their wider hinterland or sub-region as well as changing trends in tourism.

Developing and diversifying the local economy will be important to help sustain seaside communities in the future. An area of potential development is the green economy. In the UK Low Carbon Industrial Strategy (LCIS), published in July 2009, the Government set out a comprehensive strategy on how to maximise our potential for green business opportunities, job creation and economic growth.

LCIS identifies low carbon sectors where the UK has the potential to take a leading global role and where targeted government intervention can address supply chain barriers and unlock long-term competitive potential for British-based firms. In the context of seaside towns, the LCIS policy framework may be applied in a number of ways: for example, where the coastal geography provides an area with clear strengths that relate to key low carbon sectors (e.g. marine energy and off-shore wind energy production).

The new round of licenses for offshore UK wind farms announced in January 2010, could be worth £75bn and support up to 70,000 new jobs by 2020. Many of these jobs could be located in coastal areas.

There is also potential for seaside towns to benefit from the retrofitting of insulation to the existing housing stock to make it more energy efficient, to advance green building skills and the creation of new green jobs. The ageing and neglected housing stock in many seaside towns, particularly in the private rented sector, is ripe for such an approach and can contribute to wider economic and area regeneration objectives. Measures recently announced in *Warm Homes, Greener Homes: a strategy for household energy management* will greatly assist in this.

The Carbon Trust, which helps businesses cut carbon emissions and capture the potential of low carbon technologies, has supported activity in a number of seaside towns, particularly aimed at small and medium sized (SME) businesses. It has recently doubled the maximum size of its interest free energy efficiency and renewable energy loans from £100,000 to £200,000 to help SMEs with the cost of buying equipment that delivers energy savings.

A carbon management project in Lincolnshire, supported by the Carbon Trust, is using waste vegetable oil from local seaside resorts to support a bio fuel project providing fuel for local

bus services serving Skegness. Blackpool and Margate have signed up to the Carbon Trust's programme giving advice and loans to local firms to reduce carbon emissions.

Business start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in seaside towns and elsewhere will benefit from the Budget 2010 announcements to support business and growth. These include continuing to offer Time to Pay arrangements for all viable businesses to spread their tax payments, providing a temporary increase in the level of small business rate relief so eligible businesses will pay no business rates for one year from October 2010, and launching UK Finance for Growth to oversee more than £4bn of the Government's SME finance products including the Capital Growth Fund (the £200m cornerstone investment announced in the 2009 Budget).

Actions:

- ~ Explore options to exploit new opportunities on the coast to benefit seaside communities' economies, building on renewable energy generation, sustainable use of habitats and landscapes for tourism (onshore and offshore) to enhance quality of life and job opportunities for the local population.

Tourism and culture

Tourism and cultural activities continue to be the mainstay of many seaside resorts and are likely to remain so. The challenge is how the assets and potential assets of the traditional seaside town offer can be broadened to appeal to a wider range of visitors, and to reinvent seaside towns as year round places that balance the needs of visitors and residents.

The Government's Sea Change programme coordinated by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is supporting wider economic regeneration in a number of coastal areas through investment in culture and heritage. The Sea Change programme has so far given over £38m to fund regeneration projects in 32 resorts around England. Sea Change is driving cultural and creative regeneration and economic growth in seaside resorts by funding inspiring, creative and innovative projects, bringing a sense of pride, enjoyment and celebration. The programme has been a great success and it continues into 2011, with many projects now underway in seaside towns around the country.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) supports a wide variety of heritage schemes in coastal towns, ranging from parks and regeneration, to museums and community projects. It has given over £234m to 864 projects in English coastal resorts to support their regeneration since 1997, including over £100m to coastal resorts in deprived areas including Blackpool, Falmouth, Great Yarmouth, Hastings, North Shields, Penzance, Redcar, Saltburn-by-the Sea and Southport.

HLF funding has played an important role in supporting and restoring historic infrastructure and we want to build on this success. Piers are a unique part of that historic infrastructure. They have a high public value and are recognised, high-profile public spaces for both visitors and residents alike. To date, HLF has granted over £8m to seven piers around the country. But there have been barriers to extending this help.

For good reason, lottery funds are not normally used to support privately-owned properties. This has meant that many piers have not been supported by HLF grants. But in certain circumstances – for example where the pier is a much-loved part of the local seafront and offers free access to the public – there might be a case for lottery funding for privately-owned piers which are of critical public value, and we will ask the HLF to look at how a wider interpretation of public value might apply to these projects specifically.

The English seaside remains a popular destination and is supported by VisitEngland's marketing activity in the UK and internationally by VisitBritain which promotes Britain's seaside towns. This activity is complemented by RDA and local authority support for tourism. Coast is one of VisitEngland's key promotional themes in 2010-11. Seaside destinations also stand to benefit from VisitEngland's forthcoming review of common standards (i.e. star ratings etc) to ensure that the quality of accommodation and facilities remains relevant and robust in the 21st century market for tourism. A Seaside Resort Action Plan will feature in VisitEngland's Tourism Action Plan for 2010-20, due to be launched in March 2010.

In 2008, seaside destinations accounted for 19 per cent of domestic overnight trips and 21 per cent of visitor spend in the UK. While the economic downturn may account for some of this increase there may also be opportunities for seaside towns to build on the growing market for high-end tourism and environmentally friendly travel.

Meanwhile Space is a community interest company that supports individuals to bring temporarily redundant buildings and land back into constructive use. It is active in a number of seaside towns like Hastings, Scarborough and Margate where it has worked with landlords, local authorities and potential occupiers to facilitate creative and enterprising uses for temporarily vacant buildings and land.

The company is currently working with Hidden Cities to develop a seaside festival. 'Seasiding' is a five-year campaign to seek out and promote the contemporary attractions of seaside towns anchored by an annual London-based festival 'Seasiding on the Southbank.' The Government is keen to explore the possibilities for future work with such organisations to promote seaside towns, including the proposed seaside festival.

CLG is currently working with the Development Trusts Association to support the Meanwhile Project in a range of seaside and other locations. It has developed a package of support to help local authorities and their partners make use of vacant shops and spaces for a wide range of creative and community activities.

Actions:

- ~ Extending the Sea Change Programme to help improve seaside infrastructure after 2011 subject to future review of spending priorities.
- ~ HLF to review how a wider interpretation of public value might apply to funding in relation to piers, without undermining the wider priority given to properties held by not for profit owners.

- ~ RDAs and Regional Tourism Boards to ensure their tourism strategies give maximum promotion to seaside towns in their region.
- ~ Government officials to explore, with national and local creative and community enterprises active in seaside towns, how best to help these places become all year round visitor destinations.

Housing

Housing has a significant impact on the surrounding locality and there are concerns about housing markets and the quality of housing in seaside towns. The main issues are:

- ~ *polarisation in the quality of local housing between highly desirable owner-occupied property, and often poor quality private rented accommodation (including high concentrations of caravans in some areas)*



Houses in multiple occupation – improving quality and controlling proliferation

All local authorities are under a statutory duty to licence larger higher risk houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) of three or more storeys housing five or more unrelated persons. As well as protecting tenants from substandard accommodation and poor management, mandatory HMO licensing drives up the quality of accommodation in the area, and the professionalism of landlords.

Mandatory HMO licensing is a targeted measure applying to the highest risk HMOs which house some of the most vulnerable groups of people in society, and pose the greatest management challenges.

Local authorities will be able to impose conditions on licences such as requirements for licensed properties to be occupied by a specified maximum number of occupants, and that there are adequate amenities in place.

In addition there are two forms of discretionary licensing, which are currently subject to Departmental approval, these being additional HMO licensing and selective licensing of all privately rented property in a designated area.

Additional HMO licensing schemes cover smaller HMOs which do not meet the mandatory HMO licensing criteria where they have identified problems with management and property condition.

Local authorities also have the discretion to introduce selective licensing schemes to cover all privately rented property in areas which suffer or are likely to suffer from low housing demand and also to those that suffer from significant and persistent anti-social behaviour. Selective licensing of all privately rented property in an area is a highly targeted measure, and can only be used in these specified circumstances.

Future changes

We are currently consulting on whether to issue a general consent for local authorities to go ahead with these schemes, without approval from ministers. Subject to consultation, this could be in place as early as spring 2010.

In addition, we are consulting on whether to broaden the criteria for introducing selective licensing schemes. At present, schemes can only be introduced where there is evidence of anti-social behaviour or low demand which is linked to the private rented sector.

We know that some local authorities in coastal areas have particular concerns about high concentrations of HMOs and the impacts that has on communities. Until now there have been limited tools available to tackle this. From 6 April 2010 a material change of use from a dwelling house to an HMO will require planning permission. This will enable local planning authorities with coastal towns to identify new HMOs with more certainty and target specific areas where there is a need to restore community balance.

Actions:

- ~ Work with local authorities to make effective and efficient use of the new opportunities provided by the extension in houses in multiple occupation licensing to smaller HMOs.

Private sector renewal

Many seaside towns need help to address issues of disrepair and empty homes. The Private Sector Renewal programme provides funding to improve housing conditions for vulnerable people, raising their quality of life, and helping them to continue to live independently.

There are some excellent examples of local authorities using funding to support regeneration in seaside towns. In Great Yarmouth a project building on the success of other similar schemes within the town is giving several wards a new lease of life and helping promote the town as well as improving living conditions for residents. Conditions of property exteriors will be improved alongside the provision of new street furniture, renovated railings and safer lighting. Fifteen long-term empty properties will be brought back into use as around 45 self-contained, mixed tenure housing units.

Option

- ~ Explore options to share best practice in private sector renewal among the seaside towns community.

Park home/caravan sites

There are a good number of both residential and holiday caravan sites in coastal areas. All caravan sites require planning permission and a site licence, subject to certain exceptions. The planning permission and/or site licence will normally specify whether a site is for residential or holiday use.

We are aware of a range of concerns in relation to caravan sites. These include sites being run by incompetent, unscrupulous and criminal people; very poor management standards; and holiday sites being used for residential purposes. Existing powers of enforcement under the planning and site licensing system may help address some of these issues. However, we believe that the residential site licensing system needs to be overhauled to raise and maintain the standards on sites and to ensure sites are safe, well planned and well managed with appropriate facilities and services. We intend to require all residential site owners to be 'fit and proper' people.

A consultation on proposals for residential sites closed in August 2009.

Actions:

- ~ We intend to consider whether additional measures are also needed in relation to holiday site licensing, in particular to prevent site owners unsuitable for the residential sector simply moving into the holiday sector. As part of those considerations we will consult with local authorities, including those responsible for seaside towns.

Connectivity

Two of the significant and distinct challenges that tend to face seaside towns are:

- ~ *peripheral location (both in terms of road, rail and digital links)*
- ~ *demography (particularly ageing and transient populations)*

Transport

Poor transport links are often cited as a reason for economic decline in some seaside towns. The Government recognises the need to support the regeneration of more isolated places by enabling residents to connect with employment opportunities, key local services, social networks and goods. Guidance to regions and local authorities encourages them to consider this aim in formulating regional transport strategies and local transport plans.

The Government has supported and continues to support local plans to improve transport provision as part of a regeneration package.



Scarborough

We have seen widespread and growing community engagement through community rail partnerships, station friends groups and individual initiatives. This has resulted in real success in growing patronage and revenue on many lines, with some remarkable achievements such as the St Ives Bay Line where revenue grew by up to 50 per cent in two years.

Community rail partnerships are supported and represented by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. This small organisation receives most of its core funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) and is a key player in the implementation of the Department's Community Rail Strategy.

A number of other rail lines serving coastal towns e.g. the Bittern Line between Norwich and Sheringham in Norfolk and the Lymington Line between Brockenhurst and Lymington in Hampshire have benefited from the joint working of local authorities and the railway industry through community rail partnerships. These schemes offer an opportunity to link seaside and rural tourism, thereby increasing visitor numbers and overnight stays.

Another scheme where regeneration is particularly significant is the Skegness Line where there are ongoing efforts to regenerate the town and where some of the station buildings were in a poor condition. The partnership has brightened up the concourse and is engaged with local and national stakeholders to tackle the site and contribute to the regeneration of this coastal action zone.

In December 2009, the Secretary of State announced the electrification of the railway line between Preston and Blackpool North. This will be of great benefit to Blackpool by allowing electric trains to operate between Blackpool and Manchester and Blackpool and Liverpool.

Seaside towns on the Kent coast will also benefit considerably from investment in high speed commuter routes.

Major investments promoted by regions which benefit seaside towns include funding for the Plymouth Northern Corridor Transport Scheme, the Scarborough Integrated Transport Scheme and South Lowestoft Relief Road. Many more such schemes are already under construction or are currently being developed. Numerous smaller investments are funded with support from block capital allocations.

Local transport authorities are also able to target resources, according to local needs and priorities, from their Revenue Support Grant and Rural Bus Subsidy Grant allocations to improve transport links to coastal towns in their area.

Local authorities in coastal and other areas are now able to access a range of new powers under the Local Transport Act to secure the bus and public transport services needed for their areas. Working in conjunction with local bus companies they can work to better understand and more effectively meet the needs of seaside towns.

The Government has already secured the extension of concessionary fares provision to offer free travel to the elderly not only in the authorities in which they live but across

England. This should help to stimulate tourism in many seaside towns. The arrangements for funding the extended concession took special account of the needs of these seaside areas to provide for the additional visitors.

Actions:

- ~ Ask Regional Ministers, working with DfT, to take a special interest in this issue and ensure local and regional plans and strategies fully take into account the needs of our seaside towns.

Digital connectivity

Communications infrastructure is a vital component of economic activity and social inclusion. More than ever, our jobs, public services and interaction rely on modern communications, meaning that their availability is a basic requirement rather than a luxury. The *Digital Britain* white paper set out a range of actions to deliver the next phase of digital development in the UK.

To ensure communities across the UK, including seaside towns, are not left behind in the development of new digital networks, we have committed to ensuring a universal service commitment of 2Mbps broadband across the country by 2012.

However, digital connectivity is about much more than infrastructure. The move to online and digital public services will enable service providers to deliver effective public services which meet increasing demand at much reduced costs. Seaside towns often have ageing and transient populations who can find it difficult to access public services. For these groups online solutions provide the opportunity for increased engagement and personalisation. This could make a real difference to the scale and quality of the public services that seaside communities can access. In turn this could contribute to improved education, health and well being outcomes.

In support of this central and local government are working together to develop a shared vision of delivering digital public services, that will focus on the needs of the digitally excluded. Effective collaboration between service providers to learn lessons from using digital technology will support the bringing together of front office functions to improve customers' experiences.

The move to online and digital public services will also support open data which can spark a power shift between citizens and the state, enabling citizens to have at their fingertips the information they need to influence public policy, and to make more informed personal decisions.

The 'Making Public Data Public' agenda aims to make public information and data available for all to view online, free of charge. A significant amount of data is held by local authorities. We are leading work to see this local data released into the public realm. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government John Denham created the *Local Public Data Panel* to champion this agenda among local authorities and public bodies. We will also be launching a *Local Data Exchange*, where the Government's national indicators,

held with the current Data Interchange, can be linked and used more creatively than at present.

Actions:

- ~ Support the use of innovation and best practice in developing online and digital public services to ensure citizens in seaside towns have access to high quality, personalised public services

Coastal change and adaptation

The Government is working with local authorities and seaside communities to develop different approaches to adapting to coastal change. In December 2009, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) announced the creation of 15 new coastal change pathfinder authorities. These coastal local authorities, benefiting from £11m funding between them, range from Sefton in the North West, to East Sussex in the South East. They are leading the way in developing new and innovative approaches to supporting communities to adapt to coastal change. The pathfinder programme will run until spring 2011.

DEFRA's coastal change policy links with CLG's new planning policy for the coast. This aims to ensure the impact of coastal change is taken into account at all stages of the planning process so the Government strikes the right balance between economic prosperity and reducing the consequences of coastal change on coastal communities.

The new planning policy on coastal change provides a planning framework for the continuing economic and social viability of seaside and coastal communities in areas of coastal change, so long-term adaptation of communities can be planned to avoid social and economic blight, while allowing necessary development that is appropriate and safe.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) establishes a process for taking a more inclusive and forward looking approach to managing marine activities. This includes the creation of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) – which will carry out a marine planning function within the English inshore and offshore regions, guided by the Marine Policy Statement, a new streamlined licensing system; and a new system of marine planning.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) will move Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) forward through its marine planning provisions but also through reform and streamlining of a new marine consents regime. The Local Democracy, Economic Regeneration and Construction Act (2009), which introduces a single integrated regional strategy, will also enable greater participation at the local level on coastal matters, including environmental issues. These major new pieces of legislation will inform the 2011 review of the strategy for promoting an integrated approach to the management of coastal areas in England.

A strategy for success

This national strategy for seaside towns has been developed to meet the vision, strategic aims, challenges and opportunities identified in previous sections. While it is cross-cutting and cross-government it is not intended to be exhaustive and focuses on the key areas where action is most urgently needed.

The social and economic issues facing seaside towns are complex so this strategy will evolve. It recognises our seaside towns continue to have much to offer as places to live, work and enjoy but need help in overcoming the obstacles to delivering their full potential, drawing on their traditional assets and future possibilities in a low carbon economy.

The Government has a duty to ensure national policies and programmes are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of seaside towns, but these must be complemented by local and regional policies tailored to local circumstances. Through the work of the cross-departmental working group on coastal towns and the role of Regional Ministers as champions we will ensure that seaside towns receive the help they need to become vibrant year round economies that flourish and grow in the 21st century.



Devolved administrations

Given that the main challenges explored cover devolved matters, the actions proposed in this strategy cover only English seaside towns. That said, Welsh seaside towns share many of the challenges and opportunities faced by English resorts so actions proposed could well be relevant to them.

The Coastal Tourism Strategy for Wales, launched in 2008, includes a commitment to develop the tourism potential of Welsh coastal resorts in a sustainable way for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Annex. List of places that will be funded under the seaside town grant initiative

East Midlands

- ~ East Lindsey (Skegness, Mablethorpe)

Eastern Region

- ~ Great Yarmouth
- ~ Tendring (Clacton-on-Sea)

North East

- ~ Durham (Seaham)
- ~ Hartlepool
- ~ Northumberland (Newbiggen-by-the-Sea)
- ~ Redcar and Cleveland (Redcar, Saltburn-by-the-Sea)
- ~ South Tyneside (Marsden, South Shields)
- ~ Sunderland (Roker)

North West

- ~ Barrow in Furness (Piel Island)
- ~ Blackpool
- ~ Copeland (St Bees, Seascale, Whitehaven)
- ~ Wirral (Hoylake, New Brighton)

South East

- ~ Brighton and Hove
- ~ Eastbourne
- ~ Hastings
- ~ Portsmouth (Southsea)
- ~ Thanet (Margate, Ramsgate)

South West

- ~ Cornwall (Bude, Newquay, Penzance)
- ~ Plymouth
- ~ Torbay
- ~ Torridge (Bideford)
- ~ West Somerset (Minehead)

Yorkshire and Humberside

- ~ North East Lincolnshire (Cleethorpes)
- ~ Scarborough

(NB Seaside resorts listed under local authority names are indicative only and do not constitute a complete list of resorts in the authority)

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March 2010

ISBN: 978-1-4098-2379-7

