

REPORT TO:	Executive Board Briefing
DATE:	16 th December 2024
SUBJECT:	Skegness North Parade Bowling Greens
PURPOSE:	To Agree to lease the North Parade Bowling Greens to North Parade Bowling Greens Association
KEY DECISION:	Yes
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Graham Marsh - Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Leisure & Culture and Carbon Reduction.
REPORT OF:	Phil Perry, Assistant Director – Leisure & Culture
REPORT AUTHOR:	Phil Perry, Assistant Director – Leisure & Culture
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Skegness
EXEMPT REPORT?	<i>No</i>

SUMMARY

In November 2016, as part of the Transformation Programme the use of the eight bowling greens in Skegness was reviewed. The greens on South Parade are now maintained as amenity grass, and the three remaining greens to the north of the foreshore have been maintained to tournament standard by the Neighbourhoods Service. The Council continues to receive representation from the English Bowls Federation about the standard of this area, with the threat of moving the national championships to Great Yarmouth if facilities do not improve.

Bowls usage in Skegness has declined in recent years and the costs to the Council for the maintenance of the greens at circa £48,000 per annum is no longer feasible. Following the consideration to reduce the maintenance levels on the green which would be mean the greens are below tournament standards a new group (North Parade Bowling Greens Association) approached the Council with a view to managing the greens in the future and increase participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Executive Board:

1. Agree to lease the asset to North Parade Bowling Green Association at a peppercorn rent and authorise the Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director - General Fund Assets to enter in an appropriate lease that suitably and sufficiently protects the Council's position.
2. Agree to provide £100,000 grant funding to North Parade Bowling Green Association on a decreasing term over 5 years.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The demand for bowls in Skegness has declined however the English Bowls Federation along with the North Parade Bowling Greens Association have a business plan in place to help support bowls growth and promote future usage.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Option considered to revert the greens to amenity grass

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In November 2016, a review of the eight bowling greens in Skegness was conducted as part of the Transformation Programme. Officers and Councillors held meetings with representatives from local bowling clubs, tournament organizers, the Town Council, and businesses to discuss the future of bowling in the town. It was agreed that to optimize resources, the Council would focus maintenance on the three northern greens and facilitate the relocation of the bowling club currently using the southern greens, as the five greens on South Parade were underutilized and not needed for tournaments.
- 1.2 In November 2017, Historic England added areas of Skegness foreshore, including the Clock Tower and Tower Gardens, to the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in recognition of their historical significance. The Grade II registration also includes other well-known areas of the foreshore, including sunken gardens, bowling greens and the boating lake.
- 1.3 In January 2021 Magna Vitae submitted a proposal to the Council to save £40k per annum from April 2022, spent on delivering 3 bowls tournament each year where participation was declining, and a further £46k for maintaining the greens, which was accepted. Magna Vitae aimed to consult with the English Bowling Federation and home clubs based at the North Greens site, to establish requirements to enable sustained participation under a club operation model.

- 1.4 In 2021, property services contacted a nearby tenant regarding the management of the greens, but the tenant declined the opportunity. The 62nd National Championships occurred on the Bowling Greens in August 2021, with Property Services notifying the federation that future event applications must be made in-house, accompanied by a daily fee of £500. Although initial talks about the prospect of management & maintenance involved the English Bowls Federation, subsequent follow-up emails from the Council went unanswered.
- 1.5 The Council has continued with the management and maintenance of the Bowling Greens for the 2022 – 2024 seasons and had regular discussions with the English Bowls Federation (EBF) to consider transferring management responsibilities to them and the local clubs. However, further discussions revealed concerns from the EBF regarding the clubs' capacity to handle management effectively. They requested support from the Town Council, but this proposal did not advance.
- 1.6 In the summer of 2024, ELDC officers met with Skegness Town Council to discuss the possibility of the Town Council taking over the management and maintenance of the North Parade Bowling Greens. During this meeting, the Town Council expressed concerns about the costs associated with maintaining the greens and indicated they were not able to pursue that option. This led to the Council deciding the only viable option would be to revert the grass to amenity grass. This decision led to the formation of a campaign group called Save Our Bowling Greens. Following an initial public meeting that demonstrated strong community support for preserving the bowling greens, it was decided to establish the North Parade Bowling Green Association. The objective of this organisation would be to take charge of management & maintenance of the venue, ensuring the continued vitality of the sport of bowling for years to come.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 In 2024 a meeting was requested by the newly formed North Parade Bowling Green Association (NPBGA), alongside representatives from the home clubs and the English Bowls Federation. The focus of this meeting was to discuss the NPBGA potentially taking over management and maintenance responsibilities for the Bowling Greens.
- 2.2 The North Parade Bowling Green Association is making significant progress in establishing its governance framework. It is proposed that the Council grant the Association a six-year lease for the site, which includes both the greens and the building. The Association will oversee the management and upkeep of the bowling greens, while the Council will retain full responsibility for the structural repairs of the building. Additionally, all operating costs, including utilities, will be the tenant's responsibility.
- 2.3 The Association has expressed concerns regarding its future sustainability. While it will be responsible for the repair and maintenance costs, its income streams initially will be limited. After reviewing its budget, without additional financial support, the scheme will not be viable. To pave the way for a sustainable future, the Association has requested funding from the Council on a decreasing basis over the next five years. This support will allow the Association to connect with residents and businesses to secure ongoing financial backing for the Greens. According to their Business Plan (Appendix C), they have already secured a commitment of £10,000 per year from the English Bowls Federation, starting in 2026.

- 2.4 The Grant to the Association from ELDC would be £30,000 in year 1 (25/26), reducing by at least 20% per annum over years 2-5 (total amount £100,000). The ambition is to taper the grant to zero, working as appropriate with the Association to support their journey to sustainability. Discussions as appropriate regarding progress towards this ultimate ambition will take place over the described five-year period.
- 2.5 The Association leasing the Bowling Greens and associated buildings, would result in further savings being realised by the Council. The Council's spend on the greens can only be estimated due to the other work that neighbourhood's services undertake in the surrounding area but over the financial year 23/24 the cost to maintain the greens along with utility cost is circa £48,000.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The ongoing discussions between the East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) and local stakeholders highlight a significant movement towards the sustainable management of the Bowling Greens in Skegness. With the formation of the North Parade Bowling Green Association (NPBGA), there is a clear commitment to not only preserve but enhance the community's recreational asset. The proposed six-year lease would empower the Association to take control of the greens' management, while the Council maintains responsibility for structural elements.
- 3.2 However, the path to sustainability poses challenges, particularly regarding initial funding. The NPBGA requires financial support to bridge the gap as it seeks to establish its income streams. The phased financial assistance from ELDC—beginning at £30,000 in the first year and tapering off—is a strategic move aimed at fostering the Association's independence. The commitment from the English Bowls Federation also illustrates emerging partnerships that will bolster the greens' viability.
- 3.3 The transition of management to the NPBGA not only promises to realise savings for the Council but also carries the potential for revitalising community engagement and recreational activities centred around bowling. By prioritising both operational efficiency and community involvement, the initiative could lead to a sustainable future for the Bowling Greens, ensuring they continue to be a valued resource for residents and visitors alike.

EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

None

IMPLICATIONS

SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Maximise healthy and active lives.

STAFFING

There is no TUPE or redundancy implications regarding this project.

WORKFORCE CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS

None

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

DATA PROTECTION

None

FINANCIAL

Anticipated revenue savings for no longer maintaining the Bowling Greens would be Circa £48,000 per annum

Grant to the NPBGA total £100k over 5 years.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Sustainability of the North Parade Bowling Green Association

STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

Consultation was undertaken with the English Bowls Federation representing itself and its affiliated Clubs in Skegness.

Consultation was undertaken with Skegness Town Council and North parade Bowling Greens Association

REPUTATION

Removal of facilities specifically for sport will attract interest. Positive reputation will be seen for enabling a group to manage and operate the greens.

CONTRACTS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER

None

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

None

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Removal of facilities specifically for sport will impact those users who regularly use the site

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

None

ACRONYMS

None

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A

Location Plan

APPENDIX B

Facilities Plan

APPENDIX C

To follow

APPENDIX D

Letter of Support from Skegness Town Council

BACKGROUND PAPERS

'No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.'

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

'A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body'.

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	Phil Perry – phil.perry@boston.gov.uk
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Approved for publication:	CLr Graham Marsh – graham.marsh@e-lindsey.gov.uk

FINANCE PROFORMA

PROFORMA FOR APPROVAL OF THE RELEASE OF RESOURCES

(CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGETS)

FROM:

THIS PROFORMA PROVIDES THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
IN RESPECT OF THE ATTACHED

REPORT:

REPORT DATE:

OPTION 1	£ Year 1 2025/26	£ Year 2 2026/27	£ Year 3 2027/28	£ Year 4 2028/29	£ Year 5 2029/30
Revenue					
Grant	30,000	24,000	19,000	15,000	12,000
Total Revenue Cost	30,000	24,000	19,000	15,000	12,000

Funding required:

Total capital cost £0

Revenue cost £100,000

Considered by:

Enter committee here

Enter Council or
Cabinet/Executive here

Date:

Financial Services Comments

Costs to be covered by savings from removal of grounds maintenance and seasonal staffing roles relating to the bowling greens.

Risk

There is a moderate risk that the business plan of NPBGA will not be delivered. This could result in additional funds being requested from ELDC which if not forthcoming could lead to the cessation of bowling green provision at North Parade Skegness unless the bowling greens are adopted by another organisation or taken back into ELDC service.

Procurement

Value for Money Efficiency

The saving's described are across 2 service areas. £16,400 from Leisure & Culture Budget and Circa £32,000 from the neighbourhood services budget.

This FP is valid for 3 months from FP date	If this FP is no longer required, please advise Finance	If there are changes to the original report it may invalidate this document, it must be reviewed by Finance.