

**CABINET**

Wednesday, 13 June 2018

**RENAISSANCE OF EAST ANGLIAN FISHERIES (REP1872)****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. WDC on behalf of the Renaissance of East Anglian Fisheries (REAF) group have applied for £159.5k of external funding from the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) via the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to commission a feasibility study into the future opportunities for the local fishing industry following the UK's withdrawal from the EU in March 2019. This report seeks approval from Cabinet for WDC to accept this funding.
2. There is a major opportunity for the local, regional and national fishing industry to grow the domestic fishing sector following BREXIT & the commissioned report will consider the strategy required for Lowestoft to take advantage of this and re-establish itself as a significant regional fishing hub.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Lowestoft Wards
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Michael Ladd Cabinet Member for Tourism & Economic Development
<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Paul Wood Head of Economic Development and Regeneration 01394 444249 <a href="mailto:paul.wood@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">paul.wood@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Following the referendum result on the UK's membership of the EU the Renaissance of East Anglian Fisheries (REAF) group was established. The aim of the group is to explore the long term strategy for the fishing industry based in East Anglia and explore what potential growth opportunities there may be following the UK's withdrawal from the EU and the Common Fisheries Policy. The ultimate aim of the group is to re-establish Lowestoft as major regional fishing hub in the context of a significantly growing domestic fishing sector.

1.2 REAF consists of the following individuals/ organisations:

- Peter Aldous MP (Chair)
- Lowestoft Fish Market Alliance (represented by June Mummery/ Paul Lines)
- Rodney Anderson (ex DEFRA director)
- WDC (Cllr Ladd, Paul Wood & Jason Berry)
- Associated British Ports – representing Port of Lowestoft
- New Anglia LEP

1.3 REAF has evolved since its inception in 2017 and its current focus is to carry out a strategic review of East Anglia's current fishing industry, capacity, infrastructure and supply chain in order to determine what potential benefits may exist following the UK's withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy and what investment/ policy changes would be required to maximise those benefits. In order to facilitate this research, a bid for funding from the EMFF has been made by WDC on behalf of REAF. If successful, this funding will be used to commission a report focusing on the above elements and setting out a strategy for the regional fishing industry with Lowestoft as the regional hub.

1.4 The fishing industry for the purposes of this research will encompass the complete value chain from the wild catching and aquaculture sectors through to end retail and restaurant sales, including markets, trading, transport, port and other infrastructure and services, storage, and processing.

## **2 THE RENAISSANCE OF THE EAST ANGLIA FISHERIES (REAF) EMFF BID**

2.1 The proposal to undertake this work has received widespread and growing support. It was the subject of a successful conference exploring the future potential opportunities for the sector on 15th March 2018 where George Eustice, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, was the keynote speaker. The conference was attended by over 120 people including local fishermen, representatives from all sectors of related industries and supply chain, NGOs, local authorities and other public bodies (including the Marine Management Organisation, Colleges, LEP, CEFAS).

2.2 The conference received strong interest from the media and featured on national/ regional television and radio as well as being covered extensively in the press. The proposal and the

formation of REAF is seen as highly innovative with Lowestoft taking a national lead on this issue on behalf of the region. The proposed activity is also high profile for WDC as it is now seen as the most proactive local authority within the country on this issue with no other area having progressed work in this area to the extent we have. The wide ranging intelligence gathered from the conference has been used to inform the bid to the MMO for EMF funding.

- 2.3 The national and local fishing industry has expressed concern and disappointment that the UK will remain part of the Common Fisheries Policy during the Brexit transitional phase which will last until to the end of 2020. Michael Gove, the Secretary of State, has stated that he shares the industry's disappointment and that he wants to use the transitional period to ensure that the UK is in a position to make best use of the benefits that Brexit will bring. The Prime Minister has also reiterated that the Government "will be working with the fishing industry, both fishermen and fish processors, to ensure that we do see a bright future for the fishing industry." This project is designed to help shape a positive and profitable future for the industry as a whole in the region and is, therefore, entirely consistent with the Government's wishes and current strategy on fishing.
- 2.4 The objective of the research is to explore how the economic and social benefits of the fishing industry can be captured and optimised locally and regionally. There will be three main elements to this project:
- Data and information gathering, and analysis of the current situation;
  - A forward look at prospective changes and the development of possible options for bringing benefits to the regional fishing industry and coastal communities; and
  - Preparation of a regional fisheries strategy.
- 2.5 Finally an important feature of the proposed project, especially for the local fishing industry, is that this has been developed from the ground up and has not been centrally driven by Government or one of its agencies. Appendix A provides further detail on the research, analysis and strategy development this will form the commission.

### **3 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?**

- 3.1 The ultimate aim of the research and strategy being commissioned is for the local fishing industry to take advantage of any growth opportunities provided by BREXIT. In doing this it supports one of the three strategic pillars of the Business Plan i.e. Economic Growth. The study and subsequent activity will also support the delivery of the following business plan action: Provide more effective business support to facilitate the growth of Small & Medium-sized Enterprises.

### **4 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A decision on whether to award funding to WDC is expected from the MMO before the end of June 2018. The application was for £159.5k and this will include the costs of a specialist consultant working on behalf of REAF, however, council resource (via the Economic Development Team) will be required for the overall management of the project. The Head of Economic Development & Regeneration will have overall responsibility for the delivery of this project.

- 4.2 WDC will be the Accountable Body for the funding and therefore will own and manage the risks associated with the project. A process of governance will be established through a Steering Group based on the existing REAF partnership. This structure will be managed by the ED & R Team and will include relevant external partners such as Suffolk & Norfolk County councils, NALEP and REAF. The award will cover a period of 18 months from the beginning of the project and WDC will be informed of EMFF's terms and conditions if and when the award is made. It is not anticipated that these will differ significantly from those conditions normally associated with the award of external funding.
- 4.3 This funding scheme provides a 75% grant and the expectation is that the gap funding (25%) will be covered by national funding streams such as directly from the MMO. WDC via the REAF partnership is currently in discussion with the MMO on this issue.

## **5 OTHER KEY ISSUES**

- 5.1 This report has been prepared having taken into account the results of an Equality Impact Assessment, a Sustainability Impact Assessment and a Partnership Impact Assessment.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 This project and subsequent funding application has taken place in consultation with relevant Cabinet members, wide range of marine sector stakeholders and the wider community through the conference that was held in March 2018.

## **7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 The other option would be to do nothing and not carry out this research. If we do not take this opportunity to lead on this research and understand the opportunities for the local fishing industry the district and wider region may miss out on significant business and employment growth and Lowestoft may lose the opportunity to re-establish itself as a major regional fishing hub.

## **8 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 To allow WDC to accept an award of funding from the EMFF in order to fund a feasibility report and strategy into the future economic growth opportunities resulting from the UK's withdrawal from the EU and the Common Fisheries Policy.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet approves WDC accepting an award of funding from the EMFF of £159,500 to enable the undertaking of research into the potential economic growth opportunities for the local fishing industry resulting from BREXIT.

### **APPENDICES**

#### **Appendix A**

REAF procurement specifications

**BACKGROUND PAPERS – None**