

## Agenda Item:

**Report to:** CABINET

**Date:** 4 OCTOBER 2004

**Report from:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REGENERATION & PLANNING

**Title of report:** HASTINGS FISHERIES STUDY – THE NAUTILUS REPORT

**Purpose of report:**

- To update the Cabinet on the findings and recommendations of the recently completed Hastings Fisheries Study
- To seek the Cabinet's approval for further work to support the economic viability of the fishing industry and develop the tourism and educational potential of fishing related activities.

**Recommendations:**

- That the Cabinet notes the findings of the study and approves further development of the three suggested project themes: Fishing and Seafood, Tourism and Education.
- That funding opportunities to support the project themes are explored and developed.
- That the consultants' findings and options for the future are fully considered in the development of the Seafront Strategy.
- That the Cabinet endorses the proposals set out in this report and that a further report is made once the development work has been completed.

---

*The appendix to this report could not be published on the website but a copy may be obtained from Elaine Wood, Principal Committee Administrator, Telephone no. 01424 - 781717*

## 1 Background

1.1 In 2002, the Council obtained substantial funding from the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) for Keeping Afloat, a two-year programme to support the future economic viability and sustainability of Hastings' fishing fleet and integrate it more effectively with the other uses occupying the Stade. The programme consisted of a number of inter-related elements including environmental and security improvements, upgrading of industry equipment and other support activities, market promotion, and industry diversification/sustainability studies. The project themes were chosen and implemented in partnership with Hastings fishermen, other key stakeholders, and organisations having an interest in the Stade area. The completion of the SEEDA-funded Fisheries Study marks the end of the Keeping Afloat programme.

1.2 Nautilus Consultants were appointed in January 2004 to carry out the work. The purpose of the study was to identify measures that would help ensure long term and sustainable employment in the local fishing industry and associated activities. Specific objectives were as follows:

- To promote expansion of the local fishing industry.
- To diversify the industry to create more secure employment for local fishermen.
- To ensure that proposals are financial sound and economically sustainable.
- To ensure that the operations of the Fishmarket complement these objectives.

1.3 The consultants were also asked to explore industry diversification measures that had already been identified. These were:

- Promoting fishing based tourism around the Stade.
- Developing the educational role of the Stade through the Fishermen's Museum.
- A marketing programme to further develop the local fishing industry.

1.4 Key tasks for the consultants included an audit of the industry to provide a benchmark of fishing related economic activity; analysis of the opportunities and threats; identification of options for the future; and an implementation plan setting out the way forward and incorporating timing, costs, potential funding sources and responsibilities. An additional key task was the production of a business plan for the Fishmarket that would complement the Implementation Plan and ensure that the Fishmarket's activities complement the agreed direction of the local industry.

1.5 As with the other elements of the Keeping Afloat programme, key partners were involved in the development of the brief and guided the consultants' work through a Steering Group comprising representatives of the Fishermen's Protection Society, the Stade Partnership, Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, and Hastings Borough Council. Day to day management was through the Council's Economic Development team.

1.6 The consultants were based in an office above the Fishmarket and met extensively with those working on the Stade and with other persons and agencies involved in the Industry. Interim reports and presentations by the consultants at various stages enabled further local input and monitoring of the study work.

1.7 The consultants will make a brief presentation of their work and findings immediately prior to the Cabinet meeting.

## 2 Study findings

2.1 The consultants' findings and recommendations are contained in three reports: The Final Report, an Executive Summary, and a Business Plan for Hastings Fishmarket Enterprises.

2.2 A copy of the Executive Summary is appended to this report.

2.3 The full Final Report will be placed in the Members Room, and an electronic copy will be provided to Members on request. This document provides a comprehensive audit of the Fishing Industry in Hastings; considers the importance of the industry to the wider tourist offering on the Stade; looks at the importance of the industry in the regional and national context; identifies the opportunities and threats facing the industry and sets out its strengths and weaknesses. It culminates in a recommended way forward for the industry and fishing related businesses at the Stade.

2.4 The Fishmarket Business Plan analyses the current position and sets out a number of recommendations in terms of a management and operational strategy for the future. The financially sensitive nature of the information contained within the report restricts the circulation of this document.

2.5 The consultants present their recommendations for the future of the fishing industry and fishing-related activities under three main project themes:

2.5.1 Fishing and Seafood – activities to increase the value and quality of the catch, promote and develop new markets for Hastings seafood, and attract new recruits into the industry.

2.5.2 Tourism – activities to raise awareness and increase visitor spend through development of the Stade as a designated area for fishing and related activities.

2.5.3 Education – activities to link the fishing industry and associated heritage infrastructure with education

## 3 Consultation with Stakeholders

3.1 The Final Report was discussed at a recent meeting of the Stade Partnership, and there was general agreement with the study findings and the consultants' recommendations. Other specific comments included the following:

- Concerns about the funding and sustainability of the proposed staff appointments.
- The need to include the Fishermens Museum and Shipwreck Centre - this was not part of the consultants brief.
- The need for immediate action as well a long term development. Particularly important to address issues improving facilities for and welcome to tourists.
- One business and a fishing club said they had not been contacted by the consultants.

3.2 Further opportunity will be provided to discuss and develop the options and consultants' recommendations at a day-long series of workshops planned to follow the presentation by Nautilus to the Cabinet on 4 October.

#### 4 Proposals

4.1 It is proposed that the 'sector development' component of the Fishing and Seafood theme be taken forward primarily through a successful bid under the Hastings and Bexhill Area Investment Framework (AIF). This bid has secured SEEDA devolved funds to develop new markets for Hastings catch, improve the quality of the fish product and increase employment in the industry. A separate report to Cabinet (*AIF and Objective 2 funded projects and AIF Priorities*) seeks approval to implement this.

4.2 It is proposed that the Tourism Theme be developed in consultation with the Stade Partnership and in partnership with Sea Space and, in particular, having regard to Sea Space's work on developing a comprehensive destination management strategy for the area and the emerging Seafront Strategy. The consultants' recommendations for new physical developments and other improvements to enhance the visitor experience will need to be set in the context of the Seafront Strategy.

4.3 It is proposed that development of the Education theme be led by Sea Space and linked closely with development of the other themes.

4.4 The Nautilus report identifies a number of funding opportunities that warrant further investigation and it is further proposed that these and other funding opportunities are explored and developed. The consultants suggest pursuing an overarching Interreg bid and Economic Development officers are currently investigating how such a bid might be developed, either as an 'add on' to an existing programme or as a new proposal.

#### 5 Stade Partnership Action Plan

5.1 The Stade Partnership has previously set out its future intentions in the form of an Action Plan. The day to day issues arising on the Stade are now dealt with by a separate 'Stade Management Committee'. The Stade Action Plan is being refocused to address broader strategic issues and incorporate the options set out in the Nautilus Report. This Action Plan is subject to discussion and agreement with all stakeholders and will be the subject of a further report to the Cabinet once this work is complete.

**Policy implications**

Please tick if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities & Community Cohesiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic / Financial implications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights Act	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisational Consequences	<input type="checkbox"/>