

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE LYNTON AGENCY

2020 - 2023

This report is issued ahead of the scheduled three year Agency Review (March 2023) to assure North Devon Council (NDC) of the effective and efficient management of its assets in Lynton and Lynmouth under the Agency Agreement.

The key expectation (since 2015 Review) is for Lynton Agency to deliver annual surplus of £50,000 on North Devon Council assets in Lynton & Lynmouth Parish.

Uniquely, year one of this three year review cycle (20/21), was significantly affected by the pandemic. COVID impacted all sectors leading to soaring costs, reduced availability of materials and significant impact on finances. 'Lockdowns' and social restrictions which followed, had a catastrophic impact on tourism, visitor numbers were virtually zero, effectively removing the sole income stream - Car Park revenue.

Agency managers however, furloughed staff at appropriate times and successfully applied for grants during COVID. Statutory environmental and essential asset maintenance duties were fulfilled and despite zero revenue the Agency managed to return a virtually balanced budget March 2021, a surplus being impossible to achieve.

After the strictures of 20/21 Lynton Agency had a manic 21/22. With 'Staycations' in the ascent, Agency resources were inundated and on occasion, almost overwhelmed with visitors.

The year to March 2022 ended with a significant surplus of £115,400.

Half year Agency figures (22/23) currently show a surplus of £101,303 (Q2 Sept). However, with Q3 and Q4 being quieter revenue periods this is forecast to finish close to the required surplus **if** car park revenue stays as last year and once expenditure on 'special projects', outside of budget is vired from capital reserves.

Despite the challenging times and tighter margins it is pleasing to report the **average Agency surplus over the last five years remains at £54,140, above the expected amount in the face of ever increasing costs and rates of inflation.**

Agency Business during period 2021 - 2023

Harbour safety regime continues working towards compliance and bringing Lynmouth in line with the Port Marine Safety Code. Lynmouth Harbour User Group report quarterly to NDC Harbour Board. Legal research has almost concluded on the ownership and designation of Lynmouth Harbour and future licensing, maintenance and management protocol are being discussed at this time. Solar navigation lights,

on composite posts are ready to be installed; new mooring rings have been installed; damage to ladders has been repaired and redesigned to prevent reoccurrence; corroded railings from an old stairway have been removed and an access pad created for half tide use; composite railings installed to replace corroded metal versions. Where this work doubles up with activity in Ilfracombe Harbour full economies of scale are being achieved.

A joint location marine survey was undertaken to chart Ilfracombe and Lynmouth Harbours. This informed the decision regarding 'storm loss' of 40m Causeway at its seaward end. Legal Unit engaged in the process, with Head of Resources, Harbourmaster and Lynton Agency, ultimately deciding to make good the asset as is now, rather than reconstruct all 40m

Remedial works were undertaken to the upper slipway flood defences following complaint by Town Clerk to Environment Agency about shoddy work and deteriorating installation of drainage, raised wall and mortar after only months in place.

The main slipway is currently being repaired by Agency workforce, under guidance of NDC Senior Engineer, where edging quoins on the slipway have moved. Scaffold and machinery are in use but otherwise **cost is for 'materials only' on this project, as with the majority of works on NDC assets locally, as Agency workforce have the skills and capacity to complete these works.**

Earlier in the review period, when Agency workforce completed full refurbishment of Lower Lyndale toilets, they undertook partial demolition and rebuild of a substantial retaining wall and replacement safety fence in Cross Street Car Park, Lynton. Latterly, in response to NDC asset inspection, they have installed a safety fence system, including Armco barriers also in Cross Street. (All of these 'materials cost' only)

Two further walls, in Watersmeet Car Park in danger of collapsing, were repaired after a period of monitoring confirmed they were moving and presented a public hazard.

In other Car Parks there has been white lining and new space configurations applied after wear and tear to previous installations (Lower Lyndale) and 21m x 5m of resurfacing in Upper Lyndale where long term water damage had eroded the surface.

After significant liaison with supplier of Car Park machines all have been upgraded with 4G modem to cope with cashless transactions in such a difficult area for mobile connectivity (600ft cliffs don't help) One essential piece of work saw installation of a direct Ethernet connection from a local property to the first machine in Esplanade Car Park, resolving data connectivity in the area and reducing impact on local businesses from tourists seeking cash to park without making a purchase.

Performance issues relating to parking matters are reviewed monthly in a liaison meeting between Town Clerk and NDC Car Park Manager.

CEO performance is in line with colleagues across the District. Agency CEO has been praised by public and Council locally for a number of CPR and medical emergencies in or proximate to the Car Parks, plus the extensive tourist information service they provide to customers using Agency Car Parks in the Lyn Valley.

Similarly, the Agency workforce regularly receive plaudits for the quality and customer friendly nature of their performance and work ethic. Their timely ability to make minor repairs (Toilet doors damaged), sort out public health issues (blocked sewer from toilets) and design new installations (harbour ladders) is invaluable and further **exemplifies their value to Lynton Agency and the local community service they provide.**

With the Head of Environmental Enhancement - Corporate and Community settled in role, monthly performance meetings are planned with them and Waste and Recycling manager to ensure economies of scale, reduced impact on BEC based staff and local service delivery are being applied efficiently.

Benefits highlighted at 2015 review are still being realised. NDC Customer Services advise customers to attend Lynton Town Hall and collect recycling items, Wheelie Bins etc. thereby reducing NDC travel times and staff absence from BEC just to deliver low numbers of items. We believe more efficiencies can be achieved in this area.

Street sweeping rota was reviewed and renewed May 2022. Good levels of cleanliness and compliance with environmental legislation are evident through random inspection routines and public feedback. Agency staff continue to manage and service 56 Litter Bins and 15 Dog Poo Bins in the Parish.

Since the last review report Lynton Tennis Club successfully completed maintenance issues raised by an Agency asset inspection. The courts and grounds in the Lynton complex are now very well maintained. Similarly, Lynton Bowls Club secured grants (incl. LLTC) and made much needed repairs to the Clubhouse building.

Some major capital projects are currently under consideration by the Agency and NDC Estates team including Lynbridge Car Park; Harbour slipway fabrication; Retaining wall supporting the rear yard behind Lynton Town Hall; Causeway rebuild under Flood Defence grant application; [scope] reclaiming Lynmouth sea pool and reinforcement of Flood Defences along Lynmouth seaward boundary.

Lynton & Lynmouth Town Council and Agency staff would like to thank NDC and its officers for the continued working relationship and regular meetings to manage and support Agency business in Lynton and Lynmouth.

Kevin A Harris: Town Clerk
Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council
October 2022