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Subject: EU Interreg 2Seas Project FACET - supporting a Circular Economy within the tourism & leisure Sector

Report to: Environment Committee - 29 September 2021

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SUBJECT MATTER

FACET is an EU funded Interreg 2Seas project which seeks to support tourism, leisure & hospitality businesses in the borough of Great Yarmouth move to more resource efficient business models by adopting 'Circular Economy' practices.

Circular Economy (CE) solutions are those that aim to avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle the amount of waste in the system while increasing the quantity of recyclable materials and finding ways to utilise them within the local economy. With partner support and shared learning, this will be achieved by delivering a series of practical pilots over two years in the borough and measuring the impact with local hospitality sector businesses.

FACET also includes linking CE solutions with consumer/visitor behaviour change interventions thereby improving the availability of on-street litter and recycling.

As an Interreg project, FACET is a wider partnership of public, private and academic partners from across the Netherlands, France, Belgium and in the UK. The UK's named partner is Norfolk County Council and the chosen place for the investment is the borough of Great Yarmouth. The Borough Council is responsible for local delivery working with Norfolk CC's environment & waste services.

The project runs until 31st March 2023 and totals 3.9 million euros (£3.3 million) allocated across the programme.

Recommendation:

That the Environment Committee notes the contents of this report and endorses the continued development of this project.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. 'FACET' stands for: *Facilitate the Adoption of Circular Entrepreneurship in the Tourism and Leisure Sector*. Project FACET is part of the wider Interreg 2Seas Programme.

1.2. Interreg 2Seas 2014-2020 is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme covering England, France, The Netherlands and Belgium. The programme is part financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The overall objective of Interreg 2 Seas is to develop an

innovative, knowledge and research based, sustainable 2 Seas area, where natural resources are protected, and the green economy is promoted. As a result, the 2 Seas Interreg Programme provides 60% of funding to projects including FACET, all of which contribute to one of the specific objectives shown below, including, building a Circular Economy.



- 1.3. FACET involves supporting and testing how, in sustainable terms, a shift to a more Circular Economy could be achieved to benefit the tourism & leisure sector, residents and visitors. The partner business organisations in Project FACET, are therefore either tourist resorts or companies/public sector organisations promoting the visitor economy:
<https://www.interreg2seas.eu/en/FACET>.
- 1.4. Tourism and the visitor economy are a fundamental part of the economy for Great Yarmouth but, besides income, tourism also brings mass consumption of resources which could strain the already limited resources of the region. Tourists also tend to produce more waste than locals (European Environment Agency in Tourism and the Environment, 2018), further increasing the challenge, in particular, due to the seasonality of waste and waste processing.
- 1.5. With this in mind, the objective of FACET is to move away from ‘make, use, dispose’ known as the ‘linear economy’ and support local tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses in the Borough of Great Yarmouth to adopt a ‘Circular Economy’. CE uses resources for as long as possible, regenerates materials and, in turn, prevents costly and unsustainable levels of waste.
- 1.6. The overall lead partner is based in The Netherlands. In the UK, the contingent is Norfolk County Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council. The University of Greenwich is also included as an academic partner.

2. BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND PILOTS

- 2.1. Since its start-up in April 2020, the project has been gaining momentum and as of August 2021, it has over 30 local businesses across the borough signed-up to either learn more or take the bold step and be part of testing our pilots supported by both councils and our partners GYB Services Limited, Visit Great Yarmouth and the Town Centre Partnership.

- 2.2. In order to inform a set of pilot studies, a series of detailed waste audits and diagnostic meetings have been taking place with each of the interested businesses. The diagnostics are providing the FACET team with baseline data to measure the performance of pilot studies. An Action Plan for each participating business is also being developed as a result to establish 'CE business champions' that can share best practice with others in the sector in terms of practical interventions which have been proven to reduce the waste each business creates.
- 2.3. A generic Circular Economy toolkit is also in development and will be provided to all businesses signed-up to FACET in order to encourage the adoption of circular practices.
- 2.4. Research and learning to date, through speaking directly to interested local businesses suggests focusing on setting-up 4 Pilots to put in place solutions for: (1) Single Use Packaging (2) Food/Organic Waste (3) Reusable Cup Schemes and (4) Behaviour Change through an Art Sculpture Trail. These are summarised below.
- 2.5. **Single Use Packaging** – FACET is creating an opportunity for a social enterprise or Community Interest Company to take-up the opportunity to work with local communities and businesses to recycle post-consumer take away plastic packaging into other new plastic products which can be used within the borough. It is unclear at this stage if such a social enterprise exists or will be developed in response to this opportunity. However, the brief led by Norfolk County Council will also include partnering with East Norfolk Sixth Form college's design & technology department to undertake prototype testing and research as part of the pilot to develop a product (or products) which use this locally collected post-consumer plastic as a secondary raw material. The aim being to divert plastic material from disposal and turn it into valuable products that can be used locally.
- 2.6. **Food waste** – FACET will bolster the existing network of community fridges with the introduction of three new fridges in key locations where local food business can donate 'in date' items for redistribution to the local community. This will increase the ability to redistribute surplus chilled food. Subject to space being available and the types of waste generated, on site composting opportunities are also currently being explored. Self-catering accommodation providers are likely to be the most appropriate hosts due to space and suitability of waste produced for composting. A toolkit for participating businesses is also being developed which will include hints and tips to avoid food waste such as portion size and stock control.
- 2.7. **Reusable Cup Scheme** – Although many businesses are switching from polystyrene to paper cups, these are often not recyclable due to the wax lining. Therefore, many of the on-street general litter bins are filling up quickly with bulky cardboard chip trays and paper cups. FACET will tackle this issue by piloting a reusable cup scheme. The proposal is that customers will pay a £1 deposit which they will get back when the cup is dropped off at any of the participating cafés. Hemsby has been identified as a suitable location for an initial trial due to the density of food & drink outlets and willingness of local cafes to co-operatively take-part, thereby making it easier for consumers to find a local drop-off point. Similar schemes exist elsewhere (in Holt and Shrewsbury) and work within environmental health food hygiene guidelines.
- 2.8. **Behaviour Change Art Sculpture Trail** – whilst carbon reduction, net zero, and sustainability is becoming better understood across society, associating these new CE operating models in the

hearts and minds of consumers (residents and visitors) is critical to their success. The FACET pilots need people to understand and be willing to co-operate with reuse schemes and deposit their items in line with recycling rules etc when recycling on-the-go. Six iconic semi-permanent outdoor recycling drop-off points are therefore proposed. Each sculpture will encourage consumers to deposit their empty plastic bottles into eye-catching artistic drop-off bins (3 in Great Yarmouth, 1 in Hemsby and 2 in Gorleston-on-Sea) as part of the FACET project.

- 2.9. This will provide exciting opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in waste reduction activities as well as highlighting no littering and sustainability messages throughout the year. The County Council's brief, open to local and other artists, includes ensuring the art sculpture drop-off bins reflect the character of the resorts of Great Yarmouth, Hemsby and Gorleston-on-Sea – their unique history, culture, and their sustainable future. Each sculpture will be accompanied by an interpretation board to encourage CE thinking. The brief includes involvement of a series of awareness raising informative sustainability events involving local communities and schools. The purpose being to motivate individuals to think about Circular Economy principals, including prevention, reuse and recycling.
- 2.10. The council's in-house design team is supporting the FACET project with marketing and awareness-raising campaign planned once the CE interventions are in place with local businesses and on-street. This includes a new local CE brand which highlights the principles of the Circular Economy as shown below. This brand will appear and be promoted on all pilots, street bins and at the point of sale of participating businesses.



3. FACET TARGETS

3.1. The overall targets for the FACET project in Great Yarmouth are as follows:

- 20 SMEs will undertake a shift towards circularity through investments by June 2022.
- 15% reduction in amount of single use packaging by the actively participating businesses.
- 15% waste reduction and/or valorisation of otherwise generated business waste by actively participating businesses.
- 50% reduction in number of on street waste/litter collections in the geographic area(s) where street waste initiatives have been implemented.
- 20% visitor engagement with CE waste solutions.

- Involve 10 SMEs in the pilot studies.
- A reduction of at least 10% purchase costs where CE business waste solutions have been implemented as part of the pilot(s).
- Have at least 10 additional SMEs committed to implement circular solutions upon success of the pilot studies by December 2022.

3.2 Whilst it is early days in establishing the local pilots, each is being designed to meet or exceed these ambitious targets in order to make a lasting positive environmental impact on the visitor economy.

4. ON STREET LITTER IMPROVEMENTS

4.1. In addition to the pilot studies above, FACET aims to support the improvement of on-street litter, recycling and general waste facilities. This includes the introduction of 'smart' sensor bins in Hemsby which will alert waste teams when each bin is reaching capacity, thereby preventing overflowing and increasing the collection efficiency to reduce vehicle related emissions.

4.2. Bin capacity is also due to increase along Great Yarmouth seafront, in conjunction with the introduction of on-the-go recycling bins, to start capturing plastic and glass bottles and aluminium cans.

4.3. FACET will also install a number of novel 'ballot bins' <https://ballotbin.co.uk/#find-out-more> across the borough in an effort to reduce cigarette butt littering, to help keep our streets clean and tidy for residents and visitors alike.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The complete Interreg 2Seas FACET Project totals 3.9 million euros (£3.3million) across all partners in the programme over two years. Each FACET partner contributes 40% of the funding as part of the EU Interreg 2-Seas Programme with the fund providing the further 60% match. The Borough Council's contribution as part of this is £80,000 which has been funded from the existing resources and the Norfolk Strategic Fund.

5.2. The borough, as a prime tourism area, will receive the full benefit of the UK's portion of this investment which is € 790,701 in total (£678,714).

6. RISKS

6.1. The impact of COVID-19 significantly slowed down the process of business engagement up until March 2021. This has increased the time pressure in relation spend so as not be financially penalised by Interreg. The budget has been adjusted to deliver the 4 pilot studies and improvements to on-street waste management facilities to meet the required spend.

6.2. Circular Economy is a new concept to many of our local businesses. Although engagement and sign-up has been a challenge due to the pandemic, FACET now has a strong group of

businesses willing and ready to participate in the pilot studies in order for targets to be achieved.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Despite the impact of COVID-19 affecting the ability to engage with businesses around implementing Circular Economy solutions, project FACET is now in a strong position to begin shifting businesses operating in the tourism and leisure sector within the borough towards circular business models. This is due to a positive response during the last round of engagement.
- 7.2 Insights from businesses engaged on the project have helped inform the decision to deliver 4 pilots (Single Use Packaging, Food/Organic Waste, Reusable Cup Schemes and Behaviour Change Art Sculpture Trail) which will aid the adoption of Circular Economy principles, along with targeted Action Plans and the Circular Economy Toolkit. This, coupled with the improvements to on-street waste management facilities through adopting smart technology, increasing bin capacity and introducing novel ballot bins, will reduce the amount of waste produced and associated emissions while increasing the capture of recyclable materials to be used to support the local economy.
- 7.3 Being cleaner and more environmentally aware can only help to improve the borough's standing as one of the UK's main tourist destinations.

Area for consideration Comment	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation	Yes – via ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation	Yes – via ELT
Existing Council Policies (See background papers)	Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025 A Quality and Sustainable Environment
Financial Implications e.g. within existing budgets or funding identified	In budget for 2020/21 & 2021/22
Legal Implications (including human rights)	No
Risk Implications	As above
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment	No
Crime & Disorder	No
Every Child Matters	No