



**URN:** 22- 298

**Subject:** Parks, Open Spaces and Beaches

**Report to:** ELT 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023  
Environment Committee 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Report by:** James Wilson - Head of Environment and Sustainability

#### **SUBJECT MATTER**

This report updates members on the condition of St. Georges Park after its use as the site of the recent fairs and on the work ongoing to maintain the tourist beaches and reduce the vegetation growth in these key areas of Great Yarmouth beach.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee note the content of the report and the planned maintenance activities.

### **1. Background**

- 1.1. Members of the Environment Committee had recently highlighted some concerns about the condition of St. Georges Park after its use as the site for the relocated October and Easter Fairs, due to the current work taking place in the marketplace.
- 1.2. The committee also had some questions on the work ongoing to reduce the impact of the marram grass and other vegetation on the areas of tourist beach in Great Yarmouth.
- 1.3. This report aims to update members on the issues they have raised and what work has already completed and what is planned.

### **2. St. Georges Park**

- 2.1. St Georges Park is a formal park in central Gt Yarmouth and was probably first laid out as such in the early 19th Century. The easternmost part of the park was originally occupied by a private house and garden, although this was demolished and incorporated into the park in the 20th Century. It was also the site of two, now long demolished, large air raid shelters and ancillary huts in the Second World War.

- 2.2. Today it is mostly set to lawned areas with resin bound footpaths, interspersed with herbaceous flower beds with seasonal planting. There are also many mature trees and shrub beds within the park.
- 2.3. It provides a green open space for people to enjoy and goes part in linking the town centre to the seafront. The Park is enjoyed by locals and holiday makers alike and has been the location for the annual street circus and art festival for several years now.
- 2.4. It has also hosted a Christmas market in the past and more recently, because of the ongoing refurbishment of the marketplace, hosted the local Showman's Guild Easter Fair.
- 2.5. The layout of the park has remained the same since the mid-20th Century, and all pathways were resurfaced approximately some 20 years ago. They are surfaced in a resin bonded golden gravel finish which, although faded overtime, still is in good condition and provides a pleasant contrast to the surrounding grass and trees. It is a welcome change to the more commonly found black tarmac paths found elsewhere in the Borough. In fact, approx. 4 years ago two additional paths were laid in the park. These are towards the centre of the park and made permanent two short cut routes over grass that had been trodden down over time – wearing away the grass. The addition of these paths has improved this area of the park, alleviating the pressure on the grass use as part of the short cuts.
- 2.6. There are two areas of path that perhaps need attention. That is a reinstatement trench (because of services being connected to the Fountain Bar café) that is now showing signs of sinkage, and a localised depression on another path, possibly as a result of a heavy point load of some sort.
- 2.7. Please see below pictures of the two locations, and currently prices are being sought for their repair/making good.



- 2.8. There has also been damage caused to some of the slabs surrounding the Fountain Bar café, and an order has currently been issued to have these replaced/repaired.



- 2.9. In addition to the above repairs currently being undertaken, some reseeded of the grass areas heavily used during the recent fair was required. This is not uncommon when the park is used for specific events and there is minimal cost associated with this work.
- 2.10. As highlighted above, the park survey has only identified minor issues and repairs needed in the park because of this season's use of the park, these cannot be attributed to any one event. As with any asset of the Council there are always ongoing repairs and maintenance requirements. The park remains in good repair and is heavily used by the local community and tourists alike.

### 3 Beaches

- 3.1 In November 2021 the Environment Committee agreed to designate two areas of Great Yarmouth tourist beaches and to put into place control measures to prevent future plant colonisation in these locations, the two areas designated are detailed in the pictures below:



North Beach Area



Central Beach Area



- 3.2 Since this report was taken to committee a significant amount of established marram grass and other vegetation was dug from the Central beach and removed as part of the normal beach levelling activities. This process was quite labour intensive, slow and would not have been cost effective to complete every year.
- 3.3 In both March and July 2022, we trialled a ploughing technique on the Northern areas of the beach to see if this was an effective way of tackling the colonisation of the beach by marram grass and other vegetation.
- 3.4 This has been effective in slowing down the colonisation of the beach and although there are some areas on the Northern beach where we have some established areas of Marram Grass, there appears to be less overall colonisation in this section.



**Photo of Northern Beach**

- 3.5 The areas of the Central beach where the digging took place again show minimal signs of vegetation returning to the beach. As shown in the pictures below, there are however some areas of the Central beach North of the marina centre where some colonisation has restarted.



**Photos of Central Beach**

- 3.6 We are currently in the process of arranging further ploughing of the Northern and Central areas of the beach where the beginnings of colonisation can be seen and also targeted digging up of specific small areas of established marram grass and other vegetation in both of these areas in preparation for the summer season.

3.7 We will monitor throughout the season and undertake further ploughing to deal with any specific issues of colonisation as identified through visual inspections. At the end of the season, we are planning to undertake a final plough.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

4.1 Any ongoing repair at St Georges Park will be taken from the existing repairs and maintenance budget.

4.2 The ploughing and grass removal have so far been covered out of existing budgets, after this season a review will take place to establish the ongoing annual cost. In the current year the cost of ploughing the Northern sections of the beach has cost in the region of £1000.

#### **5 Risk Implications**

5.1 The use of St. Georges Park or any other Council land for hosting events has the potential to lead to damage and as such there are no additional risks highlighted as part of this report.

5.2 In relation to the beaches if no preventive work is undertaken, then there is a risk that both of these areas of beach will be colonised, and a dune structure would form across these two areas of tourist beaches.

5.3 Any removal or management works would have to be agreed with Natural England and be undertaken at times where they do not impact on the existing nearby environmental designated sites and the breeding bird season.

#### **6 Legal Implications**

6.1 Ensure all works carried out would not be in breach of any environmental legislation protecting both flora and fauna, this would be mitigated by undertaking the appropriate consultation and agreement with Natural England.

#### **7 Conclusion**

7.1 The regular ploughing of the beach will be programmed in before the season begins

#### **Background Papers**

None

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	
Existing Council Policies:	
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	None – If further funding required, to be requested through additional report.

Legal Implications (including human rights):	None as areas proposed lie outside of environmental designation and methods are low impact.
Risk Implications:	
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	
Crime & Disorder:	
Every Child Matters:	