

**Barrow Borough Council**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Thursday 24 March, 2022**  
**Final Report of the Scrutiny Work Group – Piel Island**

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**Report from:** Democratic Services Manager

**Report Author:** Paula Westwood

**Wards:** (All Wards);

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**1.0 Summary and Conclusions**

1.1 The report outlines the background and scope of the review into the future management arrangements for Piel Island, along with the recommendations and conclusions from the Work Group.

**2.0 Recommendation**

2.1 **(1) To note the outcome of the review detailed at 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11 of the report and that the Scrutiny Work Group were satisfied for the review to be concluded; and**

**(2) To agree that the report be submitted to Executive Committee for consideration of the recommendations as set out at 3.11 of the report.**

**3.0 Background and Proposals**

Background

3.1 Barrow Borough Council are the custodian of Piel Island and until late May 2021, the management of Piel Island, including the running of the Ship Inn, maintaining the toilet block and the Island grounds was undertaken by the holders of a lease from the Council. The Leaseholders had decided before the end of their lease that they wished to terminate the arrangement.

3.2 Ensuring that Piel Island could be shown to its best advantage, the Council needed to fully understand its full potential for the future. To enable to the Ship Inn to re-open after a period of closure and early termination of the lease had taken considerable effort from a team of Council Officers who had volunteered to go over to Piel Island and repaint it, organise deep cleaning and deal with a range of other issues. This had been done within a couple of weeks to then enable the Council to show prospective interested partners around the premises.

- 3.3 For the last season and in the light of the impact of Covid, a pilot partnership approach had been put in place with a provider to truly understand what the longer-term management arrangements might look like to make the best of Piel Island for all. The provider was a local company that had experience in running pubs and they subsequently established the Piel Island Pub Company. The arrangement had been that it would be from June to September 2021 and be open book accounting to understand the cost and income from Piel Island.

#### Scope of the Review

- 3.4 The Work Group wished to ensure that any long-term future management arrangements for Piel Island would be considered thoroughly in an open and transparent manner to ensure that a suitable and experienced operator would be appointed.

#### Details of the Review

- 3.5 Members of the Work Group had visited Piel Island and had attended a number of meetings with the Director of People and Place during their review.

- 3.6 The Work Group had concluded the following lessons learnt from the 2021 season:-

- Piel Island was a unique place and any operator needed to appreciate the constraints offered by power, weather, access and its location within an area of Site of Special Scientific Interest;
- Visitors to Piel Island were short stay and wanted a basic meal and drink;
- Camping and paying a small fee for that was popular;
- The relationship with the ferry operator and the management arrangements for Piel Island were really important;
- Alternative access arrangements off the island besides the ferry needed to be in place;
- More outside seating was needed to facilitate visitors;
- The community ownership of Piel Island and its local appeal and natural habitat was really important;
- There were no incidents of anti-social behaviour reported, which was contrary to perception;
- Any operator needed to manage and maintain the Island and its assets to a standard that the Council expects;
- All aspects of the Island except for external urgent repairs to the buildings and jetty maintenance would be the responsibility of the operator;
- Emergency planning for incidents with agencies was an essential part of any future management arrangements;
- There was potential for events and Piel Island is an essential element of any destination marketing. Any operator would need a formal relationship with the Council to enable this;
- Communications about Piel Island and whether buildings are open and food and drink is being served would be the responsibility of the operator; and

- Any operator needed experience in operating a licenced premises and with access to staff, financial sustainability and be prepared to open for a short period of the year whilst retaining responsibility for the premises and the Island all year round.
- 3.7 At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2021 a detailed report had been presented from the Director of People and Place regarding the future management arrangements of Piel Island. The Committee considered the report and agreed a number of recommendations to the Executive Committee as follows:-
- Agree to the proposed management arrangements as set out in the report and delegate authority to the Director of People and Place, in consultation with the Chair of Executive Committee, to undertake the procurement process and award the new contract;
  - Note their appreciation for the work that officers put into getting the Ship Inn ready to be re-opened this season at very short notice;
  - Note the lessons learnt from the partnership approach and thank the Piel Island Pub Company for their contribution; and
  - Note that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Piel Island Working Group will continue to receive progress updates.
- 3.8 The Committee had welcomed the plan for the future management arrangements of Piel Island but the Work Group needed to understand what had happened in the past, in terms of the selection process for the temporary operator for the 2021 season. A number of questions in that regard had been raised at the meeting which had been taken forward to a meeting of the Work Group in January 2022.

### Conclusion

- 3.9 Following further discussions with the Director of People and Place at the Work Group meeting in January 2022, the Work Group had concluded that they were satisfied that due process had been followed to set up the partnership arrangements for the 2021 season and that the Officers involved had done a fantastic job in the short space of time and other challenges faced, including Covid, to get the Island and the Pub up and running for the start of the season and to make Piel Island and its facilities available as often as possible for visitors during the 2021 season.
- 3.10 In respect of the long-term future management arrangements for Piel Island, it had been noted as per the recommendations to the Executive Committee (detailed at 3.7), that an open and transparent procurement process had been undertaken to award the new contract and the Work Group had welcomed the opportunity for them to oversee the Scoring Panel for the Tender submissions.
- 3.11 The Work Group wished to make the following recommendations to the Executive Committee in order to conclude the review:-

- Clear, concise and agreed requirements to be set for the tenant who is selected;
- A targeted media campaign to be established to find the most suitably qualified tenant;
- Members of the Piel Island Scrutiny Work Group to be given the opportunity to oversee the scoring process;
- Visibility to Members of profit/loss e.g. performance management information on a regular basis (3 times annually);
- All Members to be kept fully updated on activities, performance and issues etc encountered by the Council and the Tenant at least twice annually or more frequently as necessary;
- Consideration be given to a Piel Island Member Group.

#### **4.0 Consultation**

4.1 Members of the Scrutiny Work Group had met with the Director of People and Place during the review along with other Officers involved in the Piel Island 2021 season including the Head of Visitor Economy and Culture and the Head of Programme Management and Climate change.

#### **5.0 Alternative Options**

5.1 Members of the Work Group had been satisfied with the options for the future management arrangements of Piel Island which were considered to be the most appropriate at this time.

#### **6.0 Contribution to Council Plan Priorities**

6.1 Creating a vibrant, safe and welcoming place and that our neighbourhoods are clean, welcoming and attractive, working towards the outcome of our environment is enhanced, protected and celebrated.

#### **7.0 Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial, Resources and Procurement**

7.1.1 There are no issues to raise in this report.

##### **7.2 Legal**

7.2.1 There are no issues to raise in this report.

##### **7.3 Local Government Reorganisation**

7.3.1 There are no issues to raise in this report.

##### **7.4 Equality and Diversity**

7.4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

## Risk

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
N/A	N/A	N/A

## Contact Officers

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## Appendices Attached to this Report

Appendix No.	Name of Appendix
N/A	N/A

## Background Documents Available

Name of Background document	Where it is available
N/A	N/A