



A Vision for Lifeboat Road: Public Consultation Report

June-July 2019

Issued 31st October 2019

A VISION FOR LIFEBOAT ROAD CONSULTATION REPORT 2019

This document reports results of public consultation activities carried out in Formby and the surrounding areas between June and July 2019.

It has been produced by the National Trust Formby Project team as a record of residents' responses to visuals created by four architect companies. A full transcript of written comments received will be made available on request by contacting TalkingFormby@nationaltrust.org.uk

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1. Background

This report outlines the results of a community consultation carried out during June and July 2019, seeking feedback on proposals for new visitor facilities at Lifeboat Road.

Previous local consultation has demonstrated support for creating new visitor facilities (primarily a café and visitor toilets) at Lifeboat Road, but has also highlighted concerns within the local community and among wider stakeholders¹. Any development to be considered for Lifeboat Road needs to fulfill the objectives of: protecting and enhancing the natural environment and habitats of the Formby coast, improving the experience of those who visit the site, and enhancing links between the National Trust and the Formby community to bring benefits to local residents and organisations.

The support and contribution of local stakeholders is key to ensuring that these objectives are met. As an initial stage of the development of ideas for Lifeboat Road, four contrasting proposals were put out to public consultation. This process was designed to test the responses of the community and stakeholders to a range of approaches, and identify what design features and facilities would generate support for the project going forward.

2. 'A Vision for Lifeboat Road' architect's brief and visuals

Four architect companies were each asked to submit a proposal demonstrating how visitor facilities could be created at Lifeboat Road. In developing their ideas, they were asked to consider how their approach would:

- **Fit harmoniously** into the landscape, and enhance the natural environment and habitats
- **Manage the flow of visitors** to minimise the impact of busy times on the site
- **Enhance the experience of visitors** by offering a welcome area and facilities to include toilets, and a place to purchase food and drink.
- **Generate income** to fund conservation work on the Formby coast
- **Improve accessibility** of the site for all our visitors
- **Improve security** of the site
- **Provide flexibility** to cater for fluctuations in visitor numbers.

Each company produced an A1 size poster explaining their suggested approach, and a set of A3 images as an alternative format. The four proposals are available to view on the Formby National Trust website at: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/formby/projects/get-involved---the-future-of-formby-point>

¹ Previous consultation reports can be downloaded from: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/formby/projects/get-involved---the-future-of-formby-point>

3. Stakeholder consultation process and events

A range of events, attended by National Trust staff, were held to display the posters and gather feedback. The consultation, and ways to become involved were publicised locally through multiple channels:

- **Print Media:** press release to local media, including Formby Visiter / Champion and Liverpool Echo
- **Social Media:** NT Formby Facebook and Twitter, Formby Bubble,
- National Trust Formby **website**
- **Emails:** to staff, volunteers and those on information request lists
- **Targeted invitations:** to members of the Key Stakeholder Group and Community Involvement Panel
- **Local supporter email** was sent to all opted-in National Trust members in the local area
- **Staff on site** raising awareness at entrances

Responses were invited both formally through the submission of an online or paper survey, or informally through discussions with project and property staff. These took place at a variety of locations, at different times of day and on different days of the week, to maximise the opportunity for people to participate in the consultation. Architects' visuals were also available for viewing on the National Trust Formby website, and responses could be submitted by email or online. The programme of events at which the posters were displayed included:

- **Formby Library:** posters were continuously displayed between Saturday 15th June and Thursday 27th June at Formby library. The display was attended by National Trust staff on 15th 18th, 20th and 22nd June, at pre-advertised times.
- **Formby Market:** stall at Formby market on Friday 28th June.
- **Formby Festival:** stall at Formby festival between Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st July
- **Community Involvement Panel drop-in event** at Countryside office, Blundell Avenue, 12th June 2019.
- **Key Stakeholder group drop-in event** at St Joseph's prayer centre meeting room 13th June 2019.
- **Formby Countryside office:** posters were continuously displayed at the Countryside office throughout the consultation period. National Trust staff and volunteers were invited to view and respond in their own time, or attend one of two drop-in events on Sunday 16th June or Tuesday 18th June 2019.

Project staff also attended other community group events on request (e.g. Southport and Formby National Trust Association AGM, Freshfield and Formby Beach Litter Angels, Merseyside National Trust Volunteers).

4. Reach and community response

Across all events and channels a total of 135 written submissions were received and dozens more informal conversations held. The content of conversations was recorded in note form. The demographic details of those who submitted survey responses can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Who responded?		
Gender	Male	47
	Female	59
	Other gender identity	0
	Unspecified	29
Age	<20	1
	20-29	10
	30-39	16
	40-59	21
	50-69	31
	60-79	23
	>80	2
	Unspecified	31
Postcode	Formby Resident	74
	Non-Formby Resident	32
	Unspecified	29
		N=135

5. Data analysis

All survey responses were transcribed. Notes made by staff at the events, email responses and comments from social media channels were added to the transcription. From the transcriptions, data was extracted representing:

- General comments, concerns and suggestions
- Requests for specific facilities or features
- Positive, negative and neutral responses for each of the poster designs

6. Summary of findings

6.1 General comments, and requests for facilities or design features

Respondents were invited to make general comments about the proposed changes to the area. A total of 90 respondents made such comments, of which 7 were general messages of support, thanks or approval. The majority of responses included a balance of positive and negative feedback, and the number unequivocally rejecting the idea of new facilities was small (n=10). Of those respondents who expressed a view that no development should take place, the primary reason was the belief that this would result in more vehicle traffic and congestion (n=10), followed by concerns about an increase in littering (n=5). Other issues were the impact on the character of the landscape (n=4), the impact on wildlife (n=1) and increases in antisocial behaviour (n=1).

A wide range of general suggestions, ideas and comments were put forward. Examples of these, and a count of the most frequently raised subjects from the general comments section are outlined in Box 1 and Table 2 below.

Box 1. Comments, concerns and requests for facilities or design features

Thank you for the plan and for investing in our area. This will be great for us and will help us to be a welcoming community... Great designs!

I am reluctant to favour any development. The natural beauty and serenity of this area has always been very special to me. I would prefer as little development as possible.

Access to Formby coast is already at maximum volume. Provide toilets but not the rest of the proposals, none of which are sympathetic to the landscape.

Access! especially for emergency vehicles - if cars are queueing along LBR approach to carpark how will they access visitor centre?

All plans need to be wheelchair friendly.

Want focus on visitor centre with great visuals on the science / history of the site and a separate room for schools.

Security - Most designs are open - can they be protected. Given antisocial behaviour / drug taking / litter etc they are likely to attract more vandalism.

What features will reduce energy use? Ground source heat pump / solar panels / carbon neutrality.

Solar panels and even a wind turbine would set a good and responsible example whilst also minimising costs for the future.

Important to have flexibility for space for cafe expansion on hot days - numbers of visitors vary enormously

Building should reflect Formby's sea heritage and connections with the world's first lifeboat station.

Table 2. General suggestions / ideas / comments	Times cited
Improvements to vehicle access to Lifeboat Road	18
Improvements to disabled access and facilities	12
Concern that any new development should be minimal and should blend in with the landscape	12
Request for facilities for learning groups/school visits	11
Concern that the building should utilise/generate renewable energy	9
Request for facilities to be available for community use	8
Desire to see information about the site (e.g, history, nature, coastal processes) made available/displayed at the visitor hub	7
Need for increases to parking provision	7
Need for increased security / a security presence	7
Design of building should reflect history or prehistory of the site (Neolithic or Viking settlements / Lifeboat station)	4
Environmentally friendly building materials / methods*	3
Need for flexibility to cope with visitor peaks and troughs	3
Out of hours access to toilets / other facilities	3
Changing facilities or showers	2
More boardwalks	2
Bike storage	2
Facilities for dogs	2
Weather webcam	2
Clear layout for easy use by visitors	2
	N=90

*This theme also featured very strongly throughout comments on the individual designs. See section 6.2

6.2 Design feedback: Posters 1-4

Comments relating specifically to each of the design proposals are summarised below

6.2.1 Poster 1



Example image from Poster 1

The proposed building in Poster 1 received a lot of positive feedback relating to design features: in particular the way that it maximises outward views for users and offers indoor and outdoor seating opportunities. There was a sense that this design would meet visitors' expectations for a National Trust café. The majority of comments referring to the appearance and visual 'fit' of the building in Poster 1 were also positive. People referred to the building 'blending in' to the environment and the 'simplicity' of the design. Many people felt that the design was appropriately unimposing and low key, although a few referred to it being 'boring', 'unremarkable' and not inspiring enough.

The location of the development was also well received both in terms of utilising the already developed land of the carpark, and in terms of convenience and accessibility. It was also felt that the design offered flexibility to deal with peaks and troughs of visitor demand, and the potential to expand in future if required. Many people responded positively to the environmental credentials of the design both in terms of building materials and ongoing energy / resource use. One area which attracted concern around the design in poster one was the question of security of the site. The design was perceived to be difficult to secure and vulnerable to antisocial behaviour.

Box 2 Example comments on Poster 1

I like the long building as it makes the most of views. I think it will also spread out the crowds unlike the courtyard designs.

Blends more naturally into what is existing with seemingly the least impact on current site. Reminiscent of other National Trust sites, offering members and regular visitors the sense of familiarity.

Doesn't detract from main show - the environment. Has the advantage of simplicity.

This design looks as though it would cope best with the fluctuating number of visitors.

Relatively easy to extend or expand for future needs.

I like the concept of a low building that will blend with the landscape.

Attractive. Low impact.

Design is a bit unremarkable. Not imaginative enough. The shape is boxy.

Offers good access to the beach and areas of natural and environmental interest.

Access to areas for play and exploration. Opportunity for pointers to nature conservation.

Modular design allows greater flexibility.

I think it will also spread out the crowds unlike the courtyard designs. This will feel less busy on a Bank holiday.

Like the way the design is along existing roadway.

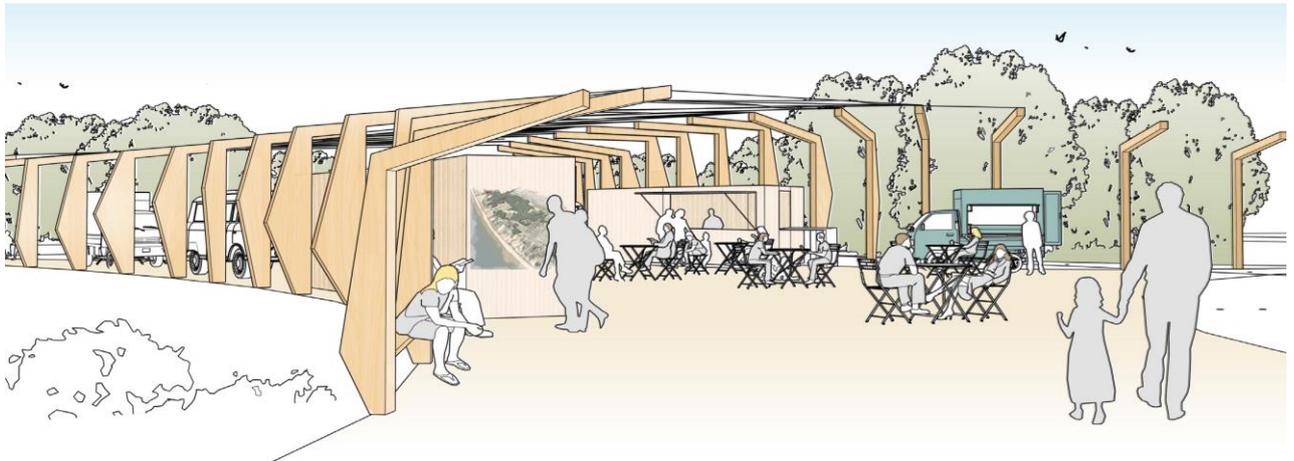
Of the four appears to offer the least impact on land usage.

I like the rainwater collection, solar panels to aid carbon footprint, and the idea of a green roof.

Difficulty in securing site 24/7.

Would it be too vulnerable to vandalism and arson?

6.2.2 Poster 2



Example image from Poster 2

Poster 2 illustrated a more deconstructed approach, and although there were features of this design that appealed to people, many comments focused on perceived impracticality of the design. The most frequent concern was that the design did not offer adequate shelter for visitors in poor weather, and would therefore not contribute to increasing the off-season appeal of the site. There were also concerns around the difficulty of securing an open-access area. This design was felt by some to be inadequate to meet the needs and expectations of visitors. This proposal considered the facilities in the context of effects across the landscape, and this led some people to assume that the development was to be spread out across the site, which was another source of some criticism.

Most of the positive comments centred on the flexibility of the approach with the potential to scale provision up or down in response to short and long term changes in demand. The approach was also seen to be the least invasive and to involve the least negative impact on the site. The minimalist appearance of the units echoing the appearance of wind-blown trees, was appreciated by some, but others felt that the design was unattractive, messy and disjointed.

Box 3. Example comments on Poster 2

- *Seems practical and appealing during the summer months.*
- *This is a beautiful design. Very open.*
- *I don't like the look of this concept, looks complicated and no sense of a proper building.*
- *Seems very open and exposed to wind / rain. Not a lot of seating for visitors.*
- *I like the idea of thinking about the necessary impact on the whole site, and this solution has the benefit of being flexible.*
- *Explores the opportunity to add additional units to meet with high / peak visitor demand.*
- *Feels disjointed and unattractive to the environment.*
- *Interesting concept based on wind-blown trees.*
- *Too much wood / a fire risk. Very difficult to keep site secure.*
- *Would not be attractive in poor weather so wouldn't improve the off-season offer. Doesn't fulfill the needs and expectations of visitors and community.*
- *Not sure it is worth doing this scale of project.*

6.2.3 Poster 3



Example image from Poster 3

The appearance of the design in Poster 3 was very well received. There was a great deal of positivity around the way the building lay low in the landscape and incorporated a green roof. The curved shape was perceived to fit well with the rounded profile of the dunes. Many people liked the idea of a wetland surrounding the building but the practicality of this and the degree of maintenance that would be required were questioned. The building approach and materials were perceived to be environmentally sensitive. Compared with other designs this was thought to be more sheltered and to be easier to secure against crime and anti-social behavior out of hours.

This design incorporated a substantial amount of landscaping and large new parking areas. While some people welcomed the idea of increasing the capacity of the car park, others felt that the degree of development of the wider area was intrusive and damaging to the natural environment. There were also concerns around the flexibility of the space and the ability to scale up or down operations to cope with changes in visitor demand. There was a concern that the enclosed courtyard area while being sheltered off-season, could become congested and would not be attractive at busier times.

Box 4. Example comments on poster 3

Most impressive and sympathetic to landscape. Love the grass roof and environmental building techniques. Would visit this regularly.

Design fits well with the landscape, blending into the dunes with grass roof.

Shelter if the weather is bad. Moat is a good feature to enhance wildlife. Secure out of hours.

Snuggles into the landscape.

A very attractive image. I like the curved shapes and the low profile building. I like the way it calls to mind Neolithic buildings.

Curves are contemporary but sympathetic. Considerate to the landscape. Love the grass roof.

Car parking space seems very big - 600+ spaces but foyer small for actual space of visitor centre.

Earth roof and rammed earth walls a very good idea. Environmentally good and low fire risk. Circular shape makes it easier to secure.

Green roofs are fine if looked after but this could soon become shabby and dull. Its boxy approach appears claustrophobic and unattractive. I don't like this option.

Not convinced that the wetland is practical. Serious concerns around visitor usage - pinch points at entry / exit and limited space when busy. Appears to have no outwards views - could be dark and messy inside.

Not enough room for everything that needs to be there. Circle too restrictive for future developments. May become too small / crowded very quickly.

Too much impact on what exists. Includes works that would be detrimental to the existing site and disrupt the natural surroundings too much.

6.2.4 Poster 4



Example image from Poster 4

Several aspects of the development illustrated in Poster 4 were well received. The design was seen to be substantial enough to incorporate a range of facilities and meet the current and future needs of visitors and local people. The materials were seen as sympathetic to the environment, and the design was perceived to be flexible and able to accommodate higher and lower visitor numbers at different times of the year. Some people felt that the development was too large and imposing however. There was a sense among some that the angular aspect of the design was not in keeping with the sweeping dunescape, and the buildings could look intrusive.

There were divided opinions regarding the approach to car parking with some people responding positively to the curved shape of the proposed car parking areas, and others suggesting that a full redesign of parking would be disruptive to the landscape. The potential for ensuring the security of the site was praised and the shelter afforded by the central area was seen to add value for off-season visitors.

Box 5. Example comments on Poster 4

Village-like approach, and has the advantage that after a low-key start could be expanded / extended. Like the site layout, particularly the way car parking is handled.

More sheltered outside area on windy days. In keeping with the environment.

Good that part can be closed off in winter when the visitor numbers are reduced.

Has the look of a Viking settlement.

The design is well thought out to mirror the landscape. As a teacher, this building is not only a fabulous learning space, but would be income generating.

My least favourite due to size and unnatural appearance. Don't think it visually sits well with landscape.

Looks like a major settlement in the landscape.

Doesn't look very attractive. Not keen on inner bit. Very angular / blocky design.

Courtyard area means there are no views from the inside.

Like this one the best - easy to secure and all facilities are enclosed.

Creates a quiet area around the hub with car parking further away. The material used blends into landscape and the car parking is less formal.

I like the courtyard idea as a place for people to sit outside.

Could provide defensibility, and offers plenty of scope for the services provided.

Positively hate the roof lines which surely should be low and sweeping, not pitched.

This design looks overly intrusive with plans for a major redesign of the car parks.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

These early results suggest that there is substantial support for proposed changes affecting Lifeboat Road, and interest and a desire for continuing community and stakeholder involvement in the project.

Across all responses, the most frequently raised theme of comments is the importance of the 'fit' of the development in the landscape. The vast majority of those responding to the proposals made some reference to the need for a development to be visually unobtrusive, and to blend into the coastal environment. Although there is some disagreement between people as to which designs meet this criteria there is a lot of enthusiasm for a low-lying development, using green or natural materials, with curved or sweeping profiles to buildings and landscaping.

Negativity about the proposals revolves predominantly around the potential impact on traffic and congestion in the local area, littering, and the wish to preserve the unique, natural atmosphere of the site. These concerns are longstanding and deeply held, and must be fully addressed in any development going forward.

Through the consultations outlined in this report, a number of recommendations reflecting community and stakeholder views have been identified. These are:

- To move into a detailed design phase for a proposed café and toilets at Lifeboat Road.
- To ensure the design and location of new amenities prioritises consideration of the landscape and visual impact of the development.
- To build flexibility into the design for the building and outdoor areas, including considering opportunities for use by the local community.
- To facilitate access to the coast for all our visitors and ensure amenities and facilities are designed to high standards of accessibility.
- To make environmental credentials / sustainability a key consideration in any development, including in the choice of building materials and approaches, use of energy saving features and renewable energy technologies.
- To consider how the development can contribute to enhancing knowledge and understanding of the Formby coast among visitors of all ages.
- To work closely with Sefton Council and the police to develop strategies to minimise the impact of traffic on local residents.
- To continue to work closely with the community of Formby and surrounding areas, and provide opportunities for involvement from local people and organisations.

These recommendations will be explored in the context of the constraints of the project budget, and the environmental and public access responsibilities of the National Trust. Details of actions taken to address the aspirations and concerns of the local community and stakeholders will be made publicly available through the 'Get Involved' section of the Formby National Trust website, as the project progresses:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/formby/projects/get-involved---the-future-of-formby-point>.

