



SUBJECT: CANVEY LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To determine how the Canvey Island Neighbourhood Board (the “Board”) will support the delivery of improvements at and around Canvey Lake as proposed in the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan (the “Regeneration Plan”) during the initial investment period 2026 to 2030.

2 LINKS TO THE CANVEY ISLAND REGENERATION PLAN

- 2.1 Canvey Lake Park is identified as Project 7 in the Regeneration Plan¹. During the public engagement which took place during October and November 2025, 273 people felt that green spaces were a priority. Concerns about the quality and future of Canvey Lake and the wildlife on and around it were frequently raised. These concerns have continued to have been raised by the local community through complaints to both the Canvey Island Town Council and Castle Point Borough Council, as well as partners such as the Environment Agency, and through a concerted social media campaign.
- 2.2 Project 7 reflects public desire for Canvey Lake and its surrounds to be a usable space for the community with a particular emphasis on family use. In order to facilitate the evolution of this open space and encourage more uses and investment, the water quality issue must be addressed first, coupled with improved information for the public and users. The lake and park is a critical part of the Regeneration Plan’s Desire Lines project, that connects areas of the town together through enhanced and more accessible open spaces.
- 2.3 The Lake was designed as part of the island’s flood management and has no natural watercourse flowing into it. The lake has attracted many wading birds

¹ [Canvey-Island-Regeneration-Plan_2025_Final_2_Feb26-1.pdf](#) Pages 83 to 85

and at one time was stocked with fish. Recent very hot and dry summers have resulted in a unprecedented drop in water levels (with no top up flow), which has exposed the build-up over time of detritus and contaminants in the water.

- 2.4 The lake and park is owned by Castle Point Borough Council, and was leased to Canvey Island Town Centre. Both assets are managed as public open space, and are accessible to all residents, subject to compliance with by-laws.
- 2.5 However, on 18 March 2026 Castle Point Borough Council (the “Council”) agreed to the surrender by Canvey Island Town Council, of the lease to Canvey Lake, returning the watercourse and its surrounding areas to the management of the Council.² Accordingly, the Council has been developing a new strategy to address various issues relating primarily to the recovery of the ecological balance of Canvey Lake. The improvement of water quality is foundational to any future use and the delivery of Project 7.
- 2.6 Project 7 is best achieved by working with the Council now, given the considerable commitment that the Council is making to improving the lake water quality, that will support the wider regeneration of the park. To lose this opportunity, and potentially the Council’s investment could set back this project. Given the strong public profile of the lake, this is a big impact investment opportunity that will be strongly supported by the local community and establish that the Board is taking significant decisions to support community priorities
- 2.7 In terms of Pride in Place funding, there is broad discretion to the Board in terms of how this is spent, which can include working with partner organisations including the Council. Beyond the criteria for the funding itself, the key limitation on the use of funding relates to the Subsidy Control Act 2022. As Canvey Lake Park is a public open space, spending on this project would not constitute a subsidy, and there is no limitation on working with the Council to deliver this proposal.

3 MATTERS FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 3.1 The Board is asked to consider and take decisions on the following matters:
- (1) Committing £500,000 of capital funding towards desilting works at Canvey Lake during 2026/27 as set out in Section 6 to this report. This sum would match-fund £500,000 which has been earmarked by the Council for this purpose.
 - (2) Committing an £25,000 of revenue funding for an education programme for Canvey Lake for the period 2026/27, as set out in section 7 of this report.

² [Item 8 Report The Future of Canvey Lake - Cabinet - 18_03_2026](#)

- (3) In principle, allocating £25,000 per year for the years 2027/28, 2028/29 and 2029/30 towards engagement and education programmes, final approval of which for each year will be subject to a separate decision.

4 CANVEY LAKE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 Canvey Lake (the “Lake”) is situated in the centre of Canvey Island and is about 2km long and about 90 metres wide at its widest point. The primary function of the Lake is to provide surface water attenuation, collecting surface water run off before it is pumped out to sea by the Environment Agency. Acting on the same principles as a domestic overflow system, the Lake forms an important part of Canvey Island’s surface water draining system.
- 4.2 As a direct result of its primary function, the Lake is fed from surface water run-off which brings with it pollutants from roads and land which negatively impacts water quality arising from leachates from the surrounding road and grassland. In addition, the Lake is a relatively shallow body of standing water which receives a lot of sunlight and is therefore prone to blue-green algae blooms which flourish in such conditions. The presence of significant numbers of roosting wildfowl for sustained periods of time is also a contributor to poor water quality.
- 4.3 Historically, the Lake has been used for fishing but that use was suspended by the Town Council in the summer of 2023 due to deoxygenation of the water caused by evaporation, high temperatures and overpopulation. The Lake however remains an important and much valued open space and park used by residents and visitors. It is also at the heart of the community, with residential communities to the north and south, and the town centre to the east. It provides a connecting route to many local schools to the west and in the centre parts of Canvey Island.

Map 1: Canvey Lake



- 4.4 Canvey Lake was designated by Natural England as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in 1998, the site was also selected as a Local Wildlife Site (LoWS) in 2002. The Council is preparing a new management plan in fulfilment of its obligations and will make that plan available for the Board to inform the longer term investment the Board may wish to make to fully deliver Project 7.
- 4.5 The works outlined in this report are planned for 2026/27 and a report will be made to a future meeting of the board on the next steps and timetable, and the Borough Council will provide regular updates to the Board as part of the Pride in Place project monitoring,

5 CANVEY LAKE AND THE CANVEY ISLAND REGENERATION PLAN

- 5.1 Over the next 10 years, Project 7 is intended to bring about the enhancement of the Lake, including the re-emergence of wildlife and the health of habitats. It also intends to create a thriving, inviting space for residents, a safe and inclusive travel route and increased community use, including for recreation and outside learning.
- 5.2 It is one of a number of location based projects within the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan that will contribute towards the sense of place and a better sense of connectivity on Canvey Island. The work undertaken on 'Desire Lines' and which underpins the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan envisaged Canvey Lake as the critical northern component of a network of open and connected places and spaces on Canvey that could be enhanced to improve the quality of life for people living here.

Map 2: Desire Lines. Imagining the Possible: What could we aim for? (extract page 15 of Canvey Island Regeneration Plan)



- 5.3 At the meeting of the Board on 19 May 2026, the Lake was considered as a discursive item. The details of that discussion are set out in the minutes from

that meeting. The overall outcome of that meeting was a clear sense of support amongst members of the Board for doing something to commence Project 7.

- 5.4 This report makes suggestions for the Board to consider which will start to bring forward Project 7. At that meeting the Board also discussed a cycling infrastructure and connectivity investment, including into and through the Canvey lake Park. Further work is being undertaken on that and a separate report will be made to the Board in due course.

6 WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS AND MANAGEMENT FOR CANVEY LAKE

- 6.1 The Council takes the view that water quality is the foundational building block for recovery of the ecology of the Lake and the creation of sustainable bio-diversity which will ensure that water quality remains as high as possible, given the constraints of the Lake i.e. the relative poor quality of the water which enters it in the first place.

- 6.2 The Council has committed £160,000 from reserves over the next three years in order to appoint a water quality specialist to undertake works and monitoring for a period of three years, commencing summer 2026 to secure improvements to the water quality at the Lake. These works will include:

- a. **Monthly monitoring:** Water quality will be monitored monthly across the Lake, including both chemical and microbiological testing. This will help:
 - identify the main factors affecting water quality
 - assess any potential risks to wildlife and the public
 - build a clearer evidence base to guide future management decisions
- b. **Making improvements to water quality:** A range of treatments will be introduced to improve water quality and reduce the conditions that lead to algal blooms. Together, these measures will support better water quality, reduce the risk of blue-green algae and create a healthier environment for wildlife. These include:
 - introducing natural bacteria to help break down excess nutrients such as ammonia
 - environmentally friendly treatments to reduce the build-up of organic silt on the lake bed
 - using a barley straw-based product to help control algae growth

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- a winter treatment to improve sediment condition, reduce odours and limit nutrients that feed algae
- c. **Making changes to enhance natural habitats:** We'll also be introducing new features to strengthen the Lake's natural environment and improve the condition of the shoreline:
- planting along sections of the bank to help reduce erosion and support vegetation
 - floating planted "eco-islands" to create habitats for wildlife and naturally absorb nutrients
- 6.3 Alongside these works, assessments are currently underway to plan for the procurement of desilting works in critical parts of Canvey Lake over the winter of 2026/27. This will improve water quality, which is primarily organic in nature and which affects the acidity and bacterial composition of the water, which in turn affects its biodiversity. The Council has committed to provide up to £500,000 from its reserves to do this. However, based on an initial assessment of the size of the Lake and the quantum of sediment, match funding is required, and the Pride in Place Board is asked to commit match funding of £500,000 towards the desilting works. The desilting will be targeted to areas where there has been the greatest degradation of water quality and where improving water quality will have, as a result, a positive impact on the water quality of the wider area. As Project 7 encapsulates the whole of the lake and the surrounding park, this is the critical first step to enhance the park experience and retain and attract wildlife.
- 6.4 The assessments underway comprise a detailed sediment survey that measures water depth and levels of silt across the length and breadth of the Lake. Samples are also being tested to check for contamination and this will help inform the way in which desilting works are commissioned.
- 6.5 These surveys will be used to define the scope of the works and the tender documents for the works. If the Board agrees to part fund these works, the Council will invite a member of the Board to participate in the tender evaluation.
- 6.6 This desilting work, alongside the water quality work already being undertaken by the Council will put the Lake in a better condition in the short term, allowing for the longer term vision to be delivered as the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan is progressed.
- 6.7 It is anticipated that following the desilting and the initial three year period of water quality management, ongoing water quality management of Canvey Lake will be embedded within the business as usual environmental management practices of the Council and its successor, ensuring that the Lake's water quality is managed in the longer term.

- 6.8 It is crucial that the investment made into improving the water quality, through targeted desilting, is sustainable, and improved management of the water quality is in place. To enable this and ensure that the management plan is fully understood and implemented, a Canvey Lake Stakeholder Group is being set up and will include local residents, the Borough Council, the Town Council, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Essex County Council and WaterWatch UK which is an organisation leading community water accountability. The Neighbourhood Board will also be invited to this Stakeholder Group so that the implementation of other aspects of Project 7, as they emerge, can be fully integrated into the long term management of the area. This will also ensure that there is ongoing stakeholder engagement, and ongoing scrutiny and accountability for water quality matters at the Lake, and provide access for the Board to key partners. This will provide a strong foundation for longer term works to improve the Canvey Lake Park as a community asset for recreation and active travel, alongside nature.

7 EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT TO SUPPORT WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

- 7.1 Residents are very interested in water quality matters related to the Lake, and also in the activity that is now underway by the Council in terms of monitoring and treatments. There are significant levels of curiosity around what can be, and is being done in relation to water quality and wildlife.
- 7.2 It is suggested that ongoing improvement works should be supported by a community education and engagement programme. There is an opportunity for this programme not only to engage with local residents and visitors to the Lake, but also local children and young people. There are two schools backing onto the Lake, and a further five schools, including both secondary schools within a ten minute walk of Canvey Lake Park. This therefore provides the opportunity for outdoor education and field science without having to leave the Island, broadening opportunities to gain practical skills and experience locally.
- 7.3 The Neighbourhood Board is therefore asked to commit £25,000 towards an education and engagement programme for the Lake for 2026/27. This funding will facilitate greater community engagement in Project 7, feeding directly into the Canvey lake Stakeholder Group and informing the Neighbourhood Board as plans for the full implementation of Project 7 emerge. Maintaining strong public support for this project will be a measure of its success. Local residents, who have strongly campaigned for the improvements that contribute to Project 7, will need to understand the works; the impact the works have; the long term sustainment of the improved water quality; how they can help to maintain the water quality; and what the wildlife and recreational benefits will be.
- 7.4 This engagement now, will provide the Board with a foundation for taking forward Project 7, at the planning and implementation stages. Officers will work with local nature conservation groups to establish how the engagement

and education programme will be delivered and a monitoring report of its effectiveness made available to the Board.

- 7.5 It is unlikely, that a one year education and engagement programme will be sufficient, as knowledge takes time to develop, and behaviours do not change overnight. However, it is also recognised that it is important to monitor the effects of any new programme and be prepared to amend or cancel something that isn't working. Therefore, the Board is also asked to provisionally allocate funding towards the education and engagement programme for the Lake, for a further three years (a total of £75,000 for 2027/28 to 2029/30). A report to the Board will be made at towards the end of 2026/27, for a decision to confirm future funding.

- 7.6 Alongside this, the Council will encourage other partners on the Canvey Lake Stakeholder Group to join in the work on the education and engagement programme, which may increase resourcing and/or reduce the call on the Pride in Place funding during the latter three year of this programme, assuming it does continue beyond year 1.

8 OPTIONS

- 8.1 There are four options available to the Board:
- 8.2 **Option 1: Do nothing:** The Board could choose to do nothing in relation to this proposal. However, residents have told us that the Lake is a priority for them, and Project 7 has been identified in the Regeneration Plan. Work on the water quality provides the basis for securing the longer term vision for the Lake set out in the Regeneration Plan.
- 8.3 **Option 2: Support the desilting element of the proposal only.** For the reasons set out in this report, the education and engagement element is critical to ensuring that the community understand what is going on at the Lake, and that their behaviours complement the work being undertaken to improve water quality.
- 8.4 **Option 3: Support both the desilting and the education and engagement programme.** For the reasons set out in this report, these two elements of work will complement each other to bring about the water quality improvements required to provide the foundation for the delivering of the longer term vision for the Lake as set out in the Regeneration Plan.

9 COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Residents have told us that improving green spaces including Canvey Lake Park was a priority for them. This was reflected in the responses from the work with children and young people that took place as part of this engagement, as well as the adults who participated.
- 9.2 Improving water quality at Canvey Lake is an important first step in delivering a place where the community and families feel they can come together in a safe and secure environment. Poor quality environments are known to attract

crime and anti-social behaviour. This results in exclusion of vulnerable people from a space and drives poor community cohesion. Environmental improvements work contrary to these negative outcomes. The inclusion of an education programme alongside the physical environmental improvements will further drive towards the creation of greater community cohesion and a more

9.3

10 FINANCIAL AND COST CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 Within the Investment Plan that sits alongside the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan, it was anticipated the Board would spend around £1.1m on Canvey Lake. At this time, the Board is being asked to commit £500,000 capital and £25,000 revenue towards Canvey Lake. It is further being asked to allocate £75,000 revenue towards the education programme in the period to 2030, if the outcomes from the initial year are favourable. This investment will total £600,000, and is in line with the Investment Plan. This will leave £500,000 to commit in later years to deliver the vision for Canvey Lake Park, once the lake itself is in a favourable condition.
- 10.2 It should be noted that at this time, the Board has £360,000 of capital for 2026/27, of which £300,000 has been committed to the Health and Wellbeing Hub at the Paddocks. However, in 2027/2028 the Board will receive £1.74m in capital funding. It is therefore proposed that the Board make the allocation towards the desilting from its 2027/28 capital allocation, with the Council forward funding the desilting to enable it to occur in the winter months when the impacts on wildlife and residents will be less significant.
- 10.3 It should be noted that in addition to the match funding for the proposed desilting of £500,000 being committed by the Council, the Council has also procured a water quality specialist who is delivering a three year programme of water quality improvements and monitoring for Canvey Lake to the value of £160,000. Specific investment in Canvey Lake by the Council is therefore £660,000 over the next three years.
- 10.4 This specific investment is in addition to grounds maintenance of the surrounding land. It is expected that ongoing water quality management and grounds maintenance will be delivered by the local authority responsible for the area for the foreseeable future, noting that the new South East Essex Council will be responsible to assets in Castle Point from 2028 onwards.

11 OTHER RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 The Council will provide project management for the delivery of the desilting and education and engagement programmes for Canvey Lake. Procurement processes will be followed to ensure that suitably qualified specialists are appointed to deliver the desilting and the education and engagement programme. It is expected that these will be two separate procurements as the skills required vary.

12 RISKS

- 12.1 The dredging activity required for desilting may attract a negative response from the community due to the disturbance and odour arising from it. This can be managed to a degree via proactive communications and through the education and engagement programme. However, this is unlikely to prevent all negative commentary on social media and/or in the local news.
- 12.2 Additionally, it should be noted that the desilting alone will not address the water quality in Canvey Lake. Water quality is affected by the behaviour of users, by the quality of run-off entering the Lake, and how the lake is managed ongoing. The education and engagement programme is intended to help residents understand how the Lake works and how they can help it to stay healthy. The Council will work with water quality specialists on an ongoing bases to manage water quality in Canvey Lake. However, there is a need for wider engagement of stakeholders including the Highway Authority, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency in terms of managing the quality of water as it enters the Lake. The Stakeholder Group is vital to bring these organisations into the conversations around Canvey Lake to help manage this risk as we move into the future.

13 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 13.1 Canvey Lake Park is a public open space, and spending of Pride in Place resources to improve the water quality would not therefore constitute a subsidy. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 does not therefore apply to this proposal. There are therefore no restrictions on funding the Council, as a partner, to deliver this work.
- 13.2 The value of the works proposed in this report require careful compliance with the Procurement Act 2023. The Council as the Accountable Body will ensure that these requirements are met.
- 13.3 The works proposed at the Lake, and the education and engagement programme, must comply fully with Health and Safety legislation to ensure that those undertaking the works, and residents and other users of the Lake remain safe.
- 13.4 The proposals in this report comply with the requirement of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as it relates to Local Nature Reserves.
- 13.5 The proposals in this report comply with the requirements of the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, as they relate to water quality enhancements.

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Attachments:

Extract of page 85 of the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan

Extract of page 85 of the Canvey Island Regeneration Plan

IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES	INTERVENTIONS/ PROJECT FOCUS PIP 2025–2035	INTERIM OUTCOMES 2025–2035	SUCCESSION INTERVENTIONS 2035–2045	LONG TERM OUTCOMES 2035–2045	LEGACY INTERVENTIONS 2045 ONWARDS
Concerns about the quality and future of Canvey Lake and wildlife	Work with the Environment Agency and Anglian Water to restore the ecological quality of the lake and ensure necessary maintenance is carried out	Enhancement of the Lake, re-emergence of wildlife and health habitats in the surrounding area. Reduced litter, misuse of facilities, feeding of geese etc.	Based on continued consultation/monitoring and progress outcomes/outputs	Improved physical and mental health outcomes linked to improved access to good quality green space and increased physical activity	Based on continued consultation/monitoring and progress outcomes/outputs
	Develop an education and engagement programme for the local community on its role in maintaining the lake				
Concerns about safety and security	Invest in public realm improvements to improve safety, accessibility and exploit potential as an active travel corridor	A thriving, inviting space for residents and visitors to visit / travel through that is safe and inclusive.		Improved social cohesion and pride in the lake and its high quality recreational amenities.	
Desire for the Lake and its surroundings to be usable by the community and especially families	Development of play spaces for children and families			Sustainable management of the lake and its delicate ecological ecosystem	