

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure
DATE	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2010
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Project (SACRP) – projects and programmes

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## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the developments of projects and programmes following the completion in February 2010 of the feasibility work identified in the scoping report that was undertaken by the University of Aberdeen for the development of the South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Project. The SACRP work links to existing city-wide initiatives to assist in promoting sustainable economic development, green tourism and social regeneration initiatives in Aberdeen, and to the Climate Change and Adaptation of the IMCORE programme.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are recommended to

- 1 Note the progress made to date on inter-agency support for the a range of projects and sub-projects through the leadership and co-ordination role undertaken by the Project Steering Group (PSG)
- 2 Endorse the continuing development of funding proposals in support for the restoration of the Torry Battery and enhancement of its environment, and agree to support the sponsorship a Torry Battery day to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its construction, to be scheduled for the summer months of 2011 as set out in section 6.2.1 of the report
- 3 Agree in principle to the continuing development of a funding bid in 2011 for European and other funding streams or the creation of the Torry Community Wetland Project, as set out in section 6.2.2. of the report
- 4 Accept an invitation by the East Grampian Coastal Partnership and the University of Aberdeen to give a presentation to Members, Officers and Partners on emergent themes of Marine Spatial Planning that links to the new legislation of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. as set out in 6.2.4 of the report
- 5 Agree to receive a report back to this Committee in the April/May 2011 cycle, and a report for information to be submitted to the following meeting of the Housing and Environment Committee

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The costs for the development of the current phase of the SACRP projects are contained within the overall EP&I capital and revenue budgets agreed by full Council for the current financial year. Funding for any future projects/sub-projects will be reported back to Members and each report will assess all capital and revenue implications for the City Council.

The proposed bid for external funding for the Torry Battery from Historic Scotland is now seeking to secure funding for the financial year 2012-2013 at the earliest.

### **4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The development of the SACRP project and sub-projects is regarded as one cornerstone linked to the promotion of sustainable development initiatives and the emergence of green tourism that will help uplift the perception and amenity of the South of the City. This can complement other economic development, social, environmental, and physical initiatives being undertaken; the Torry Battery is one example. Community involvement will continue through the work of the Project Steering Group, schools and local organisations.

### **5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

The development of the SACRP project and sub-projects as envisaged will help address a number of environmental and land management issues, and will assist in seeking to secure external funding for the implementation for any projects.

#### **Vibrant, Dynamic, Forward Looking Aberdeen (VDFL)**

SACRP actively develops the delivery of VDFL under the aspects of Education, Economic Development, Culture, Arts and Sports, and the Environment as it will bring together key organisational and support staff from the partner and community organisations.

The development of the initiatives outlined in this report will be in accord with the Interim Business Plan as adopted by the City Council at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

#### **Single Outcome Agreement (SOA)**

SACRP also assists in delivering on the SOA related to National Outcomes 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

#### ***Equality and Human Rights implications***

A full equality and human rights impact was not required, as this proposal will have a positive impact for all the equality target groups.

## **6. REPORT**

### **6.1 Context of the study**

At the meeting of this Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010 – article 4 refers, Members adopted a series of recommendations that included the creation of a formal Project Steering Group (PSG) that is chaired by the Vice-Convenor, Councillor Callum McCaig. The Group comprises of a range of organisations from all the sectors that share a community of interest in coastal zone issues in the south of the City, and has met three times; two formally and one informally to review the scope of projects that can be taken forward to help create the identity of a city coastal park

Note: A copy of the full scoping report of some 200 pages and prepared by the University of Aberdeen is available in the Members Library. A 20 page Executive Summary of the full study is regularly used to a working reference to the main study.

### **6.2 Wider Aim of the study**

The identified regeneration proposals can be regarded as directly or indirectly related to sustainable development, through economic opportunities, environmental and amenity improvements. There will be future economic development benefits but they will assist in engendering more positive attitudes in the local community and further afield to the natural quality of the coastal area which is substantially under-utilised and, to some extent, is perceived by some as unattractive, polluted and neglected. Many aspects can be corrected over time through investment (financial and social) and complimented by localised management initiatives.

The formal creation of a Coastal Park remains as a central development which can encapsulate most of the other sub-projects, and to a degree, it could be argued that the “Park” as such exists (e.g., the earlier designation of the Loirston Country Park) but this needs to be developed to higher levels of landscape, educational use and amenity provision within a universally accepted boundary.

Whilst the recommendations in this report identify specific works to enhance the area as a whole, measures will need to be taken to ensure that these works do not have a negative impact on natural heritage and archaeological interests within the coastal zone, and should also comply with the Nature Conservation Scotland Act 2004 and the Council’s Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015.

To date, attention has been given developing or supporting work that has focused on six projects/themes: -

- The Torry Battery
- Torry Community Wetlands Project

- The SSSI at Nigg Bay
- Coastal Paths and interpretation points from the mouth of the Harbour to Cove
- The Marine and Coastal Resource Centre at Nigg Bay
- Climate Challenges and Marine Spatial Planning

### **6.2.1 The Torry Battery**

The Torry Battery has significant importance in Torry and the City, and warrants special attention to address visible dilapidations in the remaining fortifications of this Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Torry Battery could be considered to be the Jewel in the Crown of the proposed city coastal park.

The Torry Battery has commanded the entrance to Aberdeen Harbour since 1860, and is considered to be one of the best-loved historical monuments in the City. It has had a long and varied history - as a coastal defence battery, emergency housing and latterly, a sanctuary for migratory birds, and an observatory point for dolphin watching. There are many rich sources of evidence about its past historical documents and maps, architectural and archaeological remains, photographs and oral reminiscences.

Research into these sources over recent years by City Council staff has highlighted many aspects of the Battery's fascinating history and led in 2000 to its scheduling by Scottish Ministers as a monument of national significance. That led in turn to recognition that such an important structure in an amenity area deserves the best of physical care and protection, to ensure its long-term preservation as a source of pride and enjoyment for the people of Torry, Aberdeen and beyond.

Broadly, this dedicated project aims to

- ensure the preservation of the Torry Battery in an attractive amenity setting, and to raise its profile by making it more attractive and accessible for visitors and tourists, both local and global
- create a safe and accessible environment for school groups and those with disabilities to be able to access the site.
- seek out and assemble peoples' memories of the Battery in the period immediately prior to, during and after the Second World War, up to the present based on reminiscences and oral histories.
- develop capacity for volunteer opportunities within the Torry and the wider community

Officers are sourcing potential funding partners but the total cost of any conservation works will require up to a 10% local contribution (£40,000) towards the costs. Historic Scotland have indicated that they are willing to offer a grant (i.e. it has already been provisionally approved) from their Ancient Monument Grants programme however this offer is on the basis that the works will be funded over two financial years namely 12/13 and 13/14 at the earliest. Note: A formal bid will take up to a year for approval.

The following spend profile has been prepared as the basis of a budget estimate provided by Mantell Ritchie (Architects) to the City Council. Historic Scotland have indicated that they are willing to offer a grant from their Ancient Monument Grants programme however this offer is on the basis that the works will be funded over two financial years namely 12/13 and 13/14 at the earliest. Mantell Ritchie has provided a schedule of works split over two years that conforms to Historic Scotland's bid requirements.

Budget Estimate	£259,050.00
Corporate Charges (@15%)	£38,857.50
Archeological Costs	£6,750.00
<b>Estimated Total Development Cost (excluding VAT)</b>	<b>£304,657.50</b>

To help promote the profile of the Torry Battery in the development of funding bids, Officers are recommending that the City Council supports the holding a Torry Battery Anniversary Day in 2011 to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> Year of the construction of the Battery. To support this initiative, Members are asked to note that a sponsorship programme to create a budget not exceeding £3000.00 will be required to support a range of activities.

### **6.2.2 Torry Community Wetlands Project (TCWP)**

It is anticipated that the Torry Community Wetlands Project will form part of a wider European funded project for the development of a Green Infrastructure Network (GIN) for the City of Aberdeen. A number of outputs are expected from a selected pilot area to help demonstrate the implementation of a GIN. Balnagask/St.Fitticks, where the proposed wetland is to be situated, is included in the pilot GIN area.

More specifically, the wetland will help to address water quality issues in the East Tullos Burn as well as help to meet the wider objectives of a number of strategies including the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015 and future Open Space Strategy.

### **6.2.3 The SSSI at Nigg Bay**

There is scope and need for improvement, albeit with due attention to conserving biodiversity and habitat/species attributes in line with the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. In general, this area appears to most visitors to be a nondescript, unattractive and untidy area between the beach and the existing road from Torry to Cove.

This coastal area is of prime concern as an integral part of the general proposal to make and to shape a more diverse and attractive landscape, including some areas of ridges and sand hills between the “beach” and the road (in the north) and the old cliffline in the south. In time, a fully –extended coastal trail could be made to integrate into the existing Core Paths for the City.

For decade’s large boulders, masonry and other materials have been dumped in this area which has been raised above its natural level. Most of the area was also surfaced by an extensive flat cover of tarmac up to 15cm thick. Now partly obscured by a veneer of vegetation, this layer is seen best along the coastal edge which is, in effect, a two-three metre high “cliff” of eroding rubble beneath a layer of tarmac.

The second level of “clean-up” requires much more substantial undertakings for the area in the southern half of the bay between the boulder beach and the base of the old cliff, which also contains the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A dedicated multi-agency group is now being led by the University of Aberdeen to develop proposals to greatly enhance the attractive and importance of the SSSI, and to give prominence to the local work of earlier geologists such as Thomas Jamieson

### **6.2.4 Coastal Paths and interpretation points from the mouth of the Harbour to Cove**

Most sites identified to date are owned by the City Council, however some are within the land ownership of the Guildry and Mortifications Board; a report to the Board will be required to be prepared for their consideration on possible future uses. An update on these developments of a series of discrete sub-projects is as follows: -

#### **◆ Sea Bed Data.**

Suitable sampling work to support projects was not undertaken this year but is expected to be completed by the summer of 2011 at no cost to the City Council through the kind services offered by Kelda Water who are obliged to undertake this survey. Both SEPA and Scottish Water have agreed to provide assistance in data analysis when necessary.

◆ The Local Information System (GIS) Database.

The Local Information System identified in the University of Aberdeen study is a G.I.S. based compilation of data and information for the Nigg Bay area. It was developed on the basis of testing its value to the project as a whole and ensuring a means by which partner organisations, especially the City Council, could access, extract and use the information in the L.I.S. Both these objectives were fulfilled by December 2009, and this part of the sub-project was also designed to ensure that additional layers of information could be added (and exchanged) into the foreseeable future for non-commercial use by both the University and the City of Aberdeen.

In addition, the L.I.S. continues to be a core element in further educational and research developments within the general scope of the SACRP project through three dimensional visualisation (and fly-throughs) that are linked to climate change scenarios. This is an important element in the “Expert Couplet” agreement between the City of Aberdeen and the University in the IMCORE European-funded research programme on best practice Coastal Zone Management. Practical arrangements are in place to ensure that access to all these ongoing and future uses can be guaranteed, i.e. the Coastal Atlas.

◆ Educational links.

These are continuing and now reach across half the City. These have include discussions with Primary as well as the Secondary Schools in the context of raising awareness but also to seek inputs on possible project experience within the range of school activities. Case studies have been undertaken by University level student projects, e.g., boat ramp, submerged breakwaters, beach mappings, data analysis linked to flood risk scenarios etc.

Seamanship courses are still deemed to be an unmet need and there is a need to link to the Curriculum for Excellence and the Learning for Change prospectus which can be included in the next progress report to this Committee.

◆ Landscaping East of Road from Torry to Cove.

This area is included within the scope of the City Council’s Nature Conservation Strategy (2010 – 2015) that was adopted by the Corporate, Policy and Performance Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010 - appendix C, Balnagask to Cove has three designations

- ◆ District Wildlife Site (Local Nature Conservation Sites)
- ◆ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- ◆ Site of Interest to Natural Science (SINS)

The beach, backshore and inland coastal platform have recorded ecological

interest, notably for the variety of coastal habitats and associated species including a nationally rare plant species. As discussed in 6.2.3, the inland fossil cliff is a geological SSSI site.

One critical conclusion from the work of the PSG to date is that interest and commitment to the development of projects and sub-projects within communities is required. In discussion with partner organisations, the East Grampian Coastal Partnership and the University of Aberdeen have offered to give a presentation on the emergent themes of Marine Spatial Planning within the provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and Members are recommended to accept this offer to enable the sharing of information to Members, Officers, Partners and Communities

Multi-sector support will also be essential preparation for the introduction to some of the key provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. This includes the preparation of a Regional Marine Plan within the National Marine Plan. Although approval by Marine Scotland is necessary, significant local stakeholder input to each Regional Marine Plan will be expected and required by a new body, to be called a Regional Marine Planning Partnership. Further consultation from the Scottish Government on the formation of such Partnerships is expected shortly and will be reported to Committee in due course.

### **6.2.5 Developing the Marine and Coastal Resource Centre**

As reported to Members at the meeting of the then South Area Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2009, this long-standing aspiration is being progressed for a facility at Nigg Bay and is regarded as a distinct sub-project within the proposed formation of a Coastal Park. The current design proposal envisages the construction of a purpose-built building with educational, community and demonstration functions at the edge of the existing car park on Nigg Bay. It would have field-centre capacity and is deemed to be part of a re-awakening of interest in the Community in its maritime heritage and its future potential.

This facility is considered to be viable in its own right but it is also important for linkages to be made to the hydrographic and hydrodynamic studies as completed during the scoping study. Some years ago a proposal to construct an artificial multi-purpose submerged reef from recycled materials was put forward and received support in principle. This links well with the boat ramp and the Marine and Coastal Resource Centre by providing both protection and, in effect, a small harbour. The submerged reef will also create a rich habitat for marine life and thereafter be of educational or possible recreational value. It would also help improve the coastal zone for sea and flood defences.

Design work on the MCRC is at a feasibility stage and a full report on capital and



revenue costs will be submitted to Members once funding sources have been secured

### 6.2.6 Climate Challenge and Coastal Zone Management

A Pan-European project provides an overarching theme for the Coastal Regeneration Projects and is vested in the Innovative Management for Europe's Changing Coastal Resource (IMCORE) <http://imcore.eu> which aims to transfer good educational and environmental practice in integrated coastal zone management between European Nation states. There is also a full set of references that links the issue of climate change on a dedicated website [www.aberdeencimatechange.net](http://www.aberdeencimatechange.net).

The City Council is a member of this project and is one half of an Expert Couplet Node (ECN) with the University of Aberdeen <http://imcore.wordpress.com/partners/aberdeen/>. This month, Aberdeen has hosted the quarterly programme meeting of IMCORE for some thirty delegates from north of Europe countries, and this ties into another Interreg project - the Living North Sea – which links rivers, fish migration to the sea (<http://www.livingnorthsea.eu> )

Work to date has developed these dedicated websites, with supporting literature and workshop scenarios that help give practical demonstration of the affects and impact of climatic change, globally and locally, and to developing a Coastal Adaptation Strategy via the ECN. One locally themed part of the programme week was to help to give a higher profile to the issues of climate change overall, and to support the continuation of the development of educational materials on Climate Change that will be used in conjunction with other curriculum material linked to the recent Scottish Government publication - Learning for Change ([www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/20152453](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/20152453) )

### 6.3 Summary.

The projects as envisaged would accumulate benefits that will be cumulative over a ten - twenty year timescale, enabling a turnaround in the degraded environmental conditions that have built up over a long period of time. Early commitment to projects and sub-projects could help bring forward these anticipated benefits, and will provide a rich backdrop to the heritage and changing climate conditions affecting the North East.

The current close association of the work of the PSG leads to a blend of expertise and outlook that is focussed on making the most of the natural assets in the South of Aberdeen, drawing on local knowledge and international awareness. These aptitudes have the potential to draw in local communities, schools, academic bodies and private sector support to realise a new role for this important part of Aberdeen, with its links to the North East coastline.

The principle focus for the work of the PSG is the development of projects that promote the goal of sustainability linked to offsets in climate change, and will also be well placed to attract external investment. In support of this goal, the Torry Community Council at a recent meeting agreed to form a fund raising group that would have the ability to bid for awards of funds that the statutory sector is unable to bid for. If any bids were successful, then a multi agency and community focused approach would be deployed in the creation of any such project, e.g., interpretation / seating / planting

Although the original scoping report produced by the University of Aberdeen focused on Nigg Bay and its surroundings, any developments will also respect proposals in adjacent areas, e.g. recording and promoting the heritage interests in Old Cove, wider Torry and Footdee.

It is also important that some of the proposals find suitable expression in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan and that the coastal path network to the South of Cove is shown to connect with the Aberdeenshire Coastal Path in the respective Core Path Plans.

## 7. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to South Area Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007 –article 16 refers

Report to South Area Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2009 –article 3 refers

Report to South Area Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009 – article 5 refers

Report to Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010 – article 4 refers