

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure
DATE	13 th September 2011
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Project (SACRP) – programme developments
REPORT NUMBER	EPI11/101

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members of the developments of projects following the completion of the SACRP feasibility studies in February 2010 that were undertaken by the University of Aberdeen for the development of the South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Projects. SACRP-related projects give a focus to existing city-wide initiatives to assist in promoting sustainable economic development, green tourism and regeneration initiatives in Aberdeen, and assist in the understanding of Climate Change Adaptation locally and globally.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to

- 1 Re-nominate an Elected Member to lead the inter-agency Project Steering Group (PSG)
- 2 Endorse the recently completed three case studies as led by the University of Aberdeen for consultations by the PSG with partner, community organisations and the wider community for the development of programmes for implementation linked to available funding
- 3 Agree to the continuing development of funding bids in this and future years for European and other external funding streams for the creation of the Torry Community Wetland Project
- 4 Agree to receive a report back to this Committee in the April/May 2012 cycle linking coastal regeneration initiatives into the mainstream development of Climate Change adaptation strategies and Flood Risk Management
- 5 Agree to refer this report for information to the next meeting of the Housing and Environment Committee

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs for the development of the current phases of the SACRP-related projects are contained within the budgets agreed by full Council for the current financial year. Funding for the implementation of 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.

As set out in section 6.2.1, the proposed bid for external funding for the Torry Battery from Historic Scotland will seek to secure funding for the financial year 2012-2013 at the earliest. In summary, the estimated costs for the conservation works at the Torry Battery are in the order of £304,657.50, and require a matched fund of some £40,000.00 as a foundation for the required external funding.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The development of the SACRP projects and sub-projects is regarded as one cornerstone linked to the promotion of climate change adaptation strategies 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; e.g. the environmental regeneration of Tullos Hill and the Torry Battery are two examples. Community involvement will continue through the work of the Project Steering Group, schools and local organisations.

5 REPORT

5.1 Context of the study

At the meeting of this Committee on 23rd February 2010 – article 4 refers, Members adopted a series of recommendations that included the creation of a formal Project Steering Group (PSG) that was originally chaired by then Vice-Convenor, Councillor Callum McCaig. This Group comprises of a range of organisations from all the sectors that share a community of interest in coastal zone and environmental issues in the City. At the meeting of this Committee held on 9th November 2010 – article 11 refers, Members received an update on the developments to date of previously identified projects. There is now a need for an Elected Member to be re-nominated to lead the PSG.

Note:

For reference, a copy of the full original SACRP scoping report of some 200 pages as prepared by the University of Aberdeen has been placed in the Members Library. A 20 page Executive Summary of the full study (this is part of the full scoping report) is regularly used to a working reference to the main feasibility study.

A short Executive Summary has been prepared by the University of Aberdeen and is attached to this report as appendix 1, and the three recently completed case studies are also available to be viewed in the Members Library.

Two maps of the coastal zone areas are shown as appendix 2a (north) and 2b (south) identifying existing and aspirational features.

5.2 Wider Aims of the study

The identified regeneration proposals in the original feasibility study 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 development of a City Coastal Park remains as a key outcome that can encapsulate most of the other sub-projects, and to a degree, it can be argued that the location of the “Park” as such exists e.g., the earlier designation of the Loirston Country Park. (Note: However. this area was planned but most of the implementation has not happened even though it is marked on OS maps as such) The aspirational intent of the City Coastal Park is one where the environment needs to be enhanced to higher levels of landscape, educational use and amenity provision within a universally accepted boundary.

Whilst the recommendations in this report identify specific projects that will contribute to enhancing 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 project work that has focused on six projects/linked 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
- Marine and Coastal Resource Centre
- Climate Change Challenges, Flood Risk Management and the development Marine Spatial Planning legislation

5.2.1 The Torry Battery

The Torry Battery, suitably tidied up and actively managed, could be considered to be the Jewel in the Crown of the proposed City Coastal Park with significance not just in Torry and Aberdeen but in the wider North East, and clearly warrants attention to address visible dilapidations in the remaining fortifications of this Scheduled Ancient Monument. The main scheduled monument legislation is The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1979/46>. The City Council is the Owner of the Torry Battery and as such has a duty of care to ensure that the Battery remains a safe and sound structure.

Broadly, the aims of the dedicated conservation project for the Torry Battery remain un-changed

- 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
- To create a safe and accessible environment for school groups and those with disabilities to be able to access the site.
- To 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.
- To develop capacity for volunteer opportunities within Torry and the wider community

The following spend profile for repairs work to the structure was prepared for the City Council as the basis of a budget estimate by Mantell Ritchie (Architects) who work as conservation specialists for the purposes of securing grant funding. Historic Scotland have indicated that they are willing to offer a grant of £80,000 over two financial years from their Ancient Monument Grants programme, 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. Note: A formal bid will take up to a year for approval.

Budget Estimate	£300,000.00
Corporate Charges (@15%)	£ 45,000.00
Archeological Costs	£ 6,750.00

Officers are continuing their work to source support and potential funding partners however, the total cost of any conservation works will require up to a 10% matched funding local contribution (£40,000) towards the estimated costs of the conservation works

Estimated Total Development Cost (excluding VAT) £351,750.00

To promote the profile of the Torry Battery in the development of funding bids, a popular information leaflet about the Torry Battery has been re-printed to commemorate the 150th Year since the construction of the Torry Battery. This will be linked to walks and talks around the Torry headlands that will be led by the officers from Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums over the coming months. A talk on the latest research into the Torry Battery will be given at the Maritime Museum on 28th September.

The enhancement of the amenity spaces around the Torry Battery is also been a long standing aspiration which would include the creation of one or more interpretation platforms overlooking the mouth of the Harbour that would enhance the site as a place to enjoy marine wildlife and the North East coastline

5.2.2 Torry Community Wetlands Project (TCWP)

It is anticipated that the Torry Community Wetlands Project will remain a cornerstone for the bigger environmental developments in the south of the City that will form part of a wider initiative to attract European and private sector sponsorship.

More specifically, the wetland will help to improve water quality issues in the East Tullos Burn (ETB) 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. Encouragingly, the early work promoted by the PSG, and led by SEPA and Scottish Water to pro-actively monitor and enforce standards for water qualities in the ETB have shown modest improvements over the last eighteen months, and are a distinct improvement on much earlier surveys which registered very poor water quality results.

5.2.3 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Nigg Bay

The upkeep and interpretation of the SSSI at Nigg is regarded to be of considerable importance locally and nationally. 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. However, 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.

Nigg Bay is a geological SSSI for the deposits it contains (not fossils, habitats or species). It is a key site for interpreting the glacial history and patterns of ice movement in north-east Scotland. During a site visit last year the geological deposits appeared to be in favourable condition.

This area could benefit from some interpretation that would help develop a wider understanding for the public, especially if it focussed on the important role of early geologists such as Thomas Jamieson who was born in Aberdeen. Any interpretation should be regarded as integral to the development and promotion of the wider area.

The University of Aberdeen has led and developed three in-depth case studies that compliment the original SACRP feasibility study. Copies of these studies have been placed in the Members Library as a reference documents alongside the original report presented to Members. Acknowledgement is also given to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) for their 1992 site report that was crucial in helping to understand how and when the high platform was built in the 1960s/1970s.

Each study sets out the basis for projects that can be developed within the original context of the regeneration of the coastal zone areas, ultimately leading to the formal designation of the City Coastal Park, with analysis and examination of data and trends, as enhanced by illustrations that are actual and computer-generated visualisations.

- The first study focuses on the development of footpaths and interpretations needed in the Nigg Bay area.
- The second study focuses on the interpretation and creation of discrete planting that can be created for the historic setting of the St. Fitticks Well.
- The third study gives particular attention to the issues of continuing and accelerating erosion of the platform facing the southern end of the Bay that includes the inland fossil cliff is a geological SSSI site.

For the area south of the East Tullos Burn and seawards of the SSSI "fossil" cliff, the most recently completed study encapsulates the "Footpath" and St. Fittick's Well proposals, and brings forward several suggestions to improve the area in the context of the earlier coastal park concept, for which a Masterplan is now emerging more clearly. The primary function of this area since the 1960s and 70s is coastal protection and this must remain of paramount importance, however, substantial landscaping, educational and amenity benefits can also be achieved.

The basic design concept as presented in the case studies is to landscape most of the area by creating a more attractive and diverse topography and vegetation. These include recommendations for substantial plantings of shrubs and trees (also useful for screening), adding (mainly by recycling suitable materials) two new types of topographic features and surface materials, specifically low mounds/ridges on the higher platform area and sand/gravel "sea" gardens on the lower surfaces closer to the ETB. Consideration is also given to the polluted stream discharging through a gully in the south corner of the Bay. The full Report is extensive and detailed with numerous computer - generated visualisations.

5.2.4 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 at a future date for their consideration on possible changes of use. An update on these developments of a series of discrete sub-projects is as follows: -

- Tullos Hill

A major restoration project is underway on the former Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill Sites. The £17 million project is two-thirds complete, on budget and on schedule. Included in the works are access and safety improvements for the Tullos Hill part of the site. These improvements to date include the creation of a new linking path in the northern part of Tullos Hill, near Tullos cairn and path diversions around the Ness Farm landfill enabling access from St Fitticks Park and the Coast Road at Doonies Farm. Works have been undertaken at access points to prevent motorcycle riders from entering the site.

Further access and amenity improvements are planned for 2011/12 that will tie in with the forthcoming major tree-planting programme. Additional footpaths will be established to increase options for round walks within the site and create a variety of paths types. A range of interpretation boards will be installed to provide information on the historic uses of the site (from pre-history to the recent landfilling activities) and the ecology of the area.

A leaflet, available for download or in paper form will be produced which will suggest round routes and provide more information on the area and links to other paths and sites of interest in south Aberdeen.

- The Local Information System (GIS) Database.

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” (ECN) agreement between the City Council and the University of Aberdeen in the IMCORE (Innovative Management for Europe’s Changing Coastal Resource), a European-funded research programme on climate change adaptation linked to best practices in Coastal Zone Management. Organisational arrangements are in place to ensure that access to all these web-based developments can be easily accessed and guaranteed, i.e. the Coastal Atlas and the visualisation models

- 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 21st 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)

As reported above, the recently completed third study concentrates on this area in detail and will be given full consideration by the City Council and partner organisations prior to undertaken any works in the area.

- Educational links.

In Torry Academy, teaching seamanship skills with a view to careers in the maritime industry has been implemented since 2006. In 2008 Kincorth Academy also had a group of pupils undertaking this subject and in 2010 Old Machar Academy had a group of participants. The size of groups has grown from an initial pilot group of 3 to groups of 8 pupils. At the moment this is the maximum size of a group due to restrictions on the number allowed in the boats for practical training and transport limitations. Increases in group sizes are being looked at by working in conjunction with Banff and Buchan College.

In 2008 the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) initiated a consultation process with the aim of writing a 'Skills for Work' course for the maritime sector. ACC participated in this process and the course was ready for delivery in 2010. Torry/Kincorth Academies presented pupils for the new course in May 2011. Torry Academy is now an approved centre to deliver 'Skills for the Maritime Centre'. Staff training to provide staff with the skills and qualifications necessary to deliver this course has taken place and all practical session follow ACC safety guidelines.

Discussions have taken place with the private sector to investigate partnership working in the practical elements of the course and give the pupils an insight into the working environment of the maritime sector e.g. Merchant navy, ports and harbours, fishing, maritime rescue, offshore oil and gas and renewables. Although at an early stage, these discussions indicate that the private sector is willing to participate in this venture and help to make it sustainable in the future.

The 2011 academy session will have groups from Torry, Kincorth and Old Machar undertaking courses and this development work will continue to embed this subject into the curriculum in order to equip pupils for a career in this important sector of Aberdeen's economy.

Reference must also be given to the work of the Ranger Service with the local schools both in terms of reducing willful fire raising and promoting responsible access to the outdoors but also in terms of other curriculum based studies which the Rangers have been involved with including work around the planting of trees etc. Education in its widest definition is not just school based and also includes the successful public events such as rock pooling at Cove.

There have also been small projects with local companies, for example staff litter picks on Tullos Hill and around the East Tullos Industrial Estate and through to the back of Tullos School.

5.2.5 Developing the Marine and Coastal Resource Centre (MCRC)

As reported to Members at the meeting of the then South Area Committee on 19th February 2009, this long-standing aspiration is being progressed and is regarded as a distinct sub-project within the proposed formation of a City Coastal Park.

Design work on the MCRC will be progressed once funding streams have been sourced and will be subject to a separate report back to Members

5.2.6 Climate Change Adaptation and Coastal Zone Management

The Pan-European project IMCORE <http://imcore.eu> has provided overarching themes linked to identified coastal regeneration projects that aim to develop and transfer sustainability, educational and environmental practices 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

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)

The IMCORE project completes at the end of October 2011 and the work undertaken to date will be launched at the final programme meeting that will take place in mid September.

5.3 Summary.

The localised 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 financial 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. Although the original feasibility 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.

Multi-sector support will also be essential preparation with 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. Continuing consultation from the Scottish Government is expected on the formation of such Partnerships and will be reported to Committee in due course.

It is important that 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 Paths in the respective Core Path Plans. In addition, there are links to the development and implementation of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and these will be the subject to future reports to this Committee.

The principle focus for the work of the PSG is now to promote the development of projects that can contribute to the twin goals of climate change adaptation and sustainability, and such projects should be well-placed to attract external investment.

6 IMPACT

Corporate

Vibrant, Dynamic, Forward Looking Aberdeen (VDFL)

SACRP actively develops the delivery of VDFL under the aspects of Economic Development, Education, Culture, Arts and Sports, 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 Five Year Business Plan.

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.

Public

The development of the SACRP project and sub-projects as envisaged will help address a number of economic development, environmental and land management issues, and will assist in seeking to secure external funding for the implementation for any projects that will greatly enhance the environment and heritage of the south of the City. Support for the PSG will be provided by the Projects, Partnerships and Funding team within Economic and Business Development, and by partner organisations

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

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to South Area Committee on 29th November 2007 –article 16 refers
Report to EP&I Committee – 23rd February 2010 – article 4 refers
Report to EP&I Committee – 9th November 2010 – article 11 refers

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