

PROPOSAL FOR LANDSCAPING AND PROTECTING THE COASTLINE NEAR NIGG BAY S.S.S.I.

(Extension of South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Project)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



South side of Nigg Bay before protection of the eroding coastline by tipping and dumping. It is thought that this photograph was taken in the 1920's

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Based on the submission of a research project entitled South Aberdeen Coastal Regeneration Project (SACRP) (Aberdeen University, 2009), Aberdeen City Council accepted, in principle, the general proposition that it was feasible to improve the appearance, amenity value and regeneration of a number of areas surrounding Nigg Bay. The overarching conceptual framework was described as a 'City Coastal Park'. An important element in this proposed development was the recommendation to landscape the coastal area south of the East Tullos Burn outlet. Three closely related studies were undertaken. The first project was a recommendation to form an improved low level footpath to promote the scientific and educational interest in the cliff escarpment which lies inland from the Coastal platform and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The second proposal was to identify and promote historical and cultural interest in an old spring-fed well, St. Fittick's well which could still be identified as a small spring in the inner part of the lower platform area south of the East Tullos Burn and near the road from Balnagask to Cove. This report, the third in the series, is entitled 'Proposal for Landscaping the coastline near Nigg Bay SSSI'.

In summary, historical evidence indicates that until the 1960s/1970s coastal erosion had caused the SSSI cliff escarpment to retreat substantially to an extent that the Balnagask to Cove Road might be at risk. A massive dumping of various 'tip' materials was undertaken for, probably 10 to 15 years, and, in places the resultant platform was raised to 5 to 7m above mean sea level and extended, in places more than 50 to 60m seawards. Later this 'platform' was surfaced with bitumen and the hard surface used for the storage of road building materials, at least to 1992. Since the 1960s coastal erosion has resumed but the rate of retreat has fallen and not reached a position where the cliff escarpment is under threat. Indeed the escarpment is mostly stable and covered in vegetation to an extent where the Quaternary stratigraphy is only visible in a few places. This relatively recent erosion, however, has produced a mixed cobble and boulder beach that is mainly derived from the cut-back of the dumped materials. It is also likely that most of the sand beaches at low tide and more fully developed to the north of the bay are also a product of this erosion.

This platform although now partly vegetated appears to offer the possibility for imaginative landscaping to improve its appearance, amenity value and general benefit to the local community. In essence, whilst retaining (and enhancing) the coastal protection function, the area could be transformed by creating a more diversified whale-back, vegetated, topography in the central area. To the south the extension of the platform could be improved by mixing existing vegetation with 'sea garden' features. (A sea garden is essentially a level sandy/gravel surface with a scatter of small attractive features such as rock walls, plantings, including shrubs, low shelter fences and other 'amenity' features, including a meandering footpath. A similar 'sea garden' approach is recommended for the low platform lying south of the East Tullos Burn outlet which also continues inland as far as the Balnagask to Cove Road. Tree and shrub planting would improve the shelter, screening and appearance of many parts of this area, including the margin of the aforementioned road.

More are provided in this report, including a solution and general improvement of a polluted stream which runs down the escarpment and has carried mud/clay/rubble down on to the beach in the south angle of the bay. (This is presently fenced-off for safety reasons).

Many consultations both within and outwith the City Council, professional advice and permissions will be needed, but the proposals appear to be relatively low cost, feasible and, although all the projects need not be completed at the same time, could transform an area into a more attractive public space that would contrast with its relatively unused and to most eyes unattractive, semi derelict appearance, for the benefit of the local community and visitors.