

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	23 August 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	City Centre and Beach Masterplan – Annual Update
REPORT NUMBER	COM/23/245
DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
REPORT AUTHOR	Claire McArthur
TERMS OF REFERENCE	21

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Council on 25 August 2022 approved the City Centre and Beach Masterplan 2022 and instructed the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to keep the report under review and to report on progress after 12 months. This report provides Members with an update on this basis.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

- 2.1 Note the progress made over the last 12 months to advance a wide range of projects contained within the City Centre and Beach Masterplan, and agree the updates provided to Sections 6, 8 and Appendix 1 of the Masterplan report (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Note the expected activity to be undertaken over the next 12 months, as set out in paragraph 3.19 of this report and within Section 8 of Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to continue to keep the Masterplan report under review, and to provide another progress report to Full Council after 12 months.
- 2.4 In relation to Phase 2 of the Beach area, note the summary of comments received on the initial public consultation exercise on how people currently use these areas, and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to prepare a Development Framework for the Phase 2 areas, which will be reported back to Full Council before the end of 2024.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Aberdeen City Council at its meeting in August 2022 agreed the Aberdeen City Centre and Beach Masterplan 2022 (CCBMP). The Masterplan was developed to serve the following purposes:

- An investment tool that showcases the city;
- A live programme that can be flexible in responding to current and future trends/needs;
- A communications tool to enable understanding; and
- A reference document to identify priorities, next steps and monitor progress.

3.2 The City Centre and Beach Masterplan is a strategic, place-led, project-focused, overview which sits above the existing suite of more site specific masterplan reports. The City Centre Masterplan and Beachfront Development Framework have not been superseded by this strategic report, but rather sit underneath the CCBMP as ‘daughter’ documents. This strategic relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

3.3 The CCBMP was shortlisted in the “Best Plan” category at the recent RTP I Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence 2023.

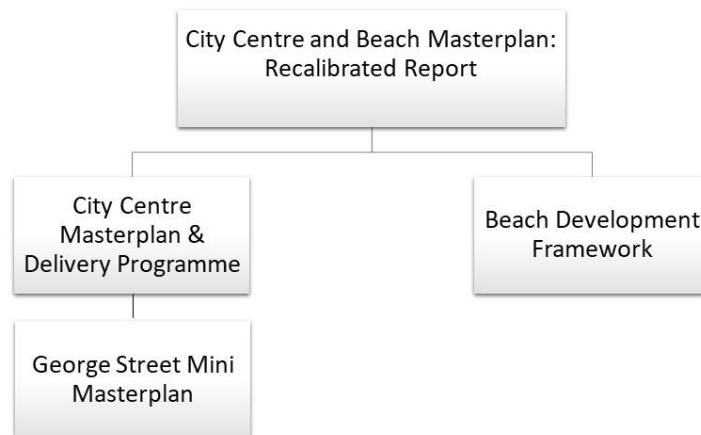


Figure 1: Strategy Relationships

Progress Report 2023

Project Work

3.4 Over the past year, significant progress has been made on a number of high priority projects from the City Centre and Beach Masterplan, and a number of new projects have been further scoped following the approval of the Beachfront Phase 1 Development Framework in May 2023. Given the relatively short time frame since original approval of the Masterplan, the focus of this update report is on Sections 6 and 8 of the Masterplan, along with Appendix 1. An update to these specific sections is provided as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.5 The updated Section 6 provides a summary of the key Masterplan projects being taken forward by the City Council and includes a “Current Status” and “Looking Ahead” section at the top of each project page. Highlights from the last 12 months as detailed in this Section include:

- Aberdeen Market – site demolition complete, preferred operator onboard, revised planning application submitted and Heads of Terms nearing completion.
- Union Street Central, Market Streetscape (Phase 1) & Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate – full business case approved, funding in place and progressing to a start on site in early 2024.
- Union Street East / Castlegate & Justice Street, Union Street West & West End and Market Streetscape (Phases 2 and 3) - continued progression of the remaining streetscape projects further to December 2022 instruction from Full Council that cycle lane provision should be investigated.
- Union Street Empty Shops - action plan of interventions to target empty shops on Union Street approved by Council in December 2022. To support these interventions a £500,000 grant scheme aimed at reconfiguring vacant ground floor units to enable reoccupation by new businesses and tenants was launched in July 2023.
- Queen Street – Strategic Business Case approved in December 2022, with an Outline Business Case and preferred option being presented to this same August 2023 Full Council meeting.
- George Street – Draft Mini Masterplan approved in December 2022, with public consultation undertaken on the document in early 2023. ,
- Beachfront Development Framework – the Development Framework for Phase 1 of the Beach area was approved by Council in May 2023.
- Beach Public Realm - progress on Public Realm Phase 1A Projects reported to Council in December 2022, with a Full Business Case being presented to this same August 2023 Full Council meeting. Outline Business Case for Justice Street Roundabout approved in May 2023. Strategic Business Case on Phase 1C Project and Coastal Management work reported to Full Council in April 2023.
- Beach Proposed Stadium and Leisure – Outline Business Case for integrated stadium and leisure development reported to Council in December 2022.
- Beach Ballroom – Concept work undertaken to fully establish project brief.

- 3.6 As the above projects have progressed, a broad range of statutory and non-statutory consultees have been engaged on all the main aspects of the key projects and regular reviews are being carried out. Specialist accessibility and inclusivity advice has also been provided on a number of detailed projects, including the City Centre Streetscape proposals and Aberdeen Market, and Accessibility Audits undertaken. The outcome of these consultations, along with any additional evidence gathered, will be fed into integrated impact assessments for the individual projects and made available to inform any future decisions.
- 3.7 There are two projects where less progress has been made than anticipated. Applications to the planning authority were due to be submitted late last year in order to establish the permanent introduction of external spill-out spaces for cafes, restaurants and bars within the Belmont Quarter area. Trader representatives from the area were however keen to investigate wider scale changes to traffic management arrangements to allow more flexibility in the location of spill-out zones. Initial discussions with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have been undertaken on this basis and the Council's Traffic Management Team will continue to liaise with property owners in the area to determine what access and service requirements property's have to try and reach a proposal that, as far as possible, satisfies all users. It will also be important to ensure that future proposals for the Belmont Quarter are considered alongside the construction programme for Union Street Central and any access requirements that may be required.
- 3.8 Over the last 12 months consultation with property owners has also been undertaken as part of the Union Street Façade Works project. Feedback to date has been supportive of carrying out both repair and improvement works, however owners have highlighted that they would have difficulty contributing financially to these works. As such, Private Sector finance / grant funding is still being sought to help move forward the project but until this is achieved progress will continue to be constrained.
- 3.9 In March 2023 "Our Union Street", a community-led organisation with the objective of bringing businesses and people back to Union Street, was launched. Aberdeen City Council acts as a partner in Our Union Street, alongside other key stakeholders such as Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen Inspired and Opportunity North East. In June 2023 a White Paper was launched by Our Union Street and set out 17 key areas to inform a future Action Plan. A number of these key areas are relevant to the projects defined within the City Centre and Beach Masterplan, and the Council's City Growth Officers are in regular discussion with the organisation on future steps.

Beach Phase 2

- 3.10 At the August 2022 Council meeting, Members noted a revised Beach Masterplan boundary to include the Footdee Conservation Area and the area north to the River Don, and agreed that any new development associated with the Beach Masterplan should seek to enhance the setting of the historic settlement of Footdee and protect the valuable natural habitat and open space.

- 3.11 Officers were subsequently instructed to explore opportunities, as part of a Phase 2 of the Beach Masterplan, to improve active travel and public transport connectivity between Footdee and other parts of Aberdeen, and to consult on this at a later date as may be necessary.
- 3.12 An initial public consultation exercise on Phase 2 of the Beach area took place over 6 weeks in May-June 2023. The consultation was launched as an early fact finding exercise to determine how people currently use the areas identified within Phase 2, to identify what people consider are the positive and negative features within these areas, and to put forward suggestions on how these areas could be improved in the future. A report summarising the consultation feedback is available at Appendix 2.
- 3.13 The consultation was publicised by the Council's communications team and was available online via the Citizen Space consultation hub. Key stakeholders were contacted directly via email, and posters were displayed locally with a freephone number to call for those who couldn't access information electronically. Local traders were visited, and meetings held with interested stakeholders. A total of 675 responses were received with 70% of those responding describing themselves as from the wider Aberdeen area.
- 3.14 For the area described as Phase 2 North (north from roughly Accommodation Road to the River Don) 59% of respondents noted that they current drive to this area, with 15% walking and 19% using a combination of travel modes. The most popular reasons for visiting this area are shown in Figure 2, with the top 3 reasons noted as:
- access to the beach and sea
 - use of promenade, and
 - making use of the adjoining greenspaces.

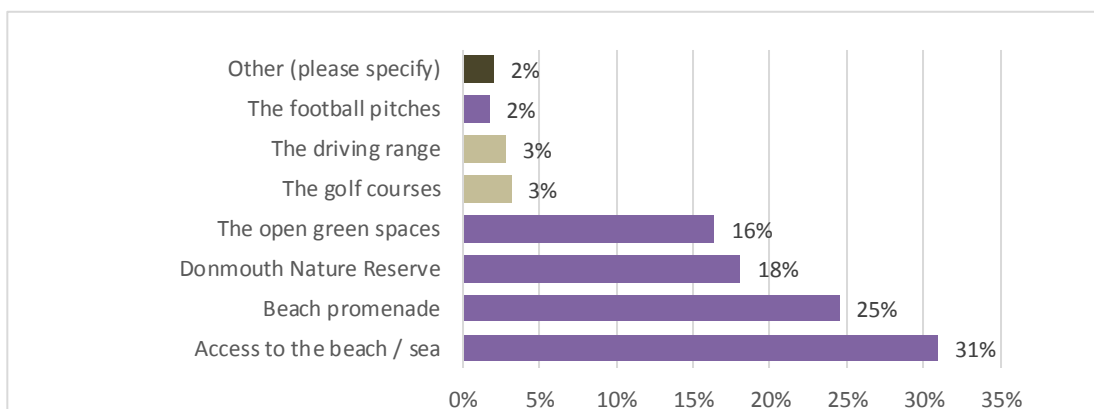


Figure 2: Phase 2 North – Most Popular Reasons For Visiting

- 3.15 The top suggestions for improvements to this area are shown in Figure 3, with the top 3 suggestions being to improve biodiversity, improve access to beachfront and improve footpaths. Other comments requested better

facilities e.g. toilets and changing, more businesses and improved maintenance and access.

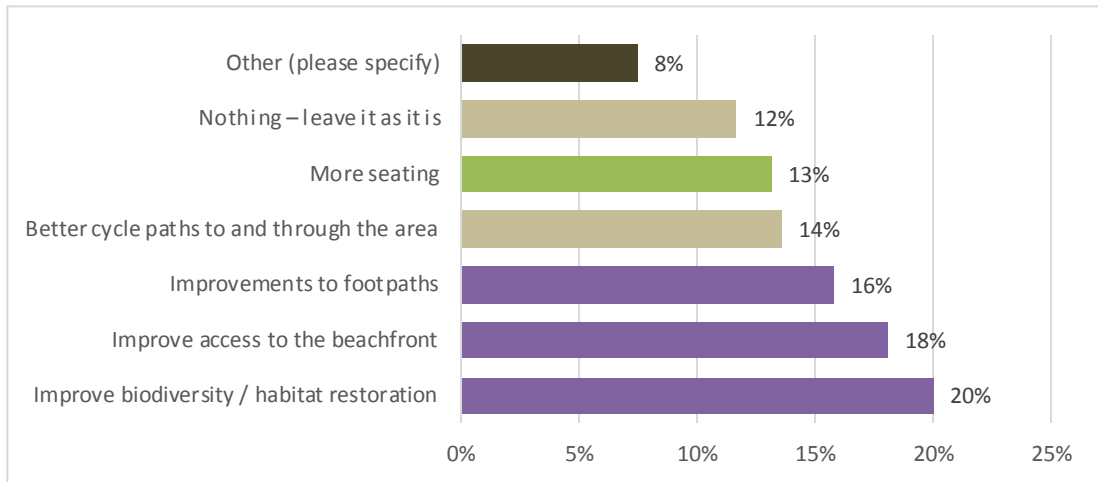


Figure 3: Phase 2 North – Most Popular Suggestions for Future Improvement

3.16 For the area described as Phase 2 South (south from roughly Queen’s Links to Footdee / River Dee) 62% of respondents noted that they current drive to this area, with 14% walking and 18% using a combination of travel modes. The most popular reasons for visiting this area are shown in Figure 4, with the top 3 reasons noted as:

- access to the beach and sea,
- using the promenade,
- the café / foodtrucks and leisure facilities.

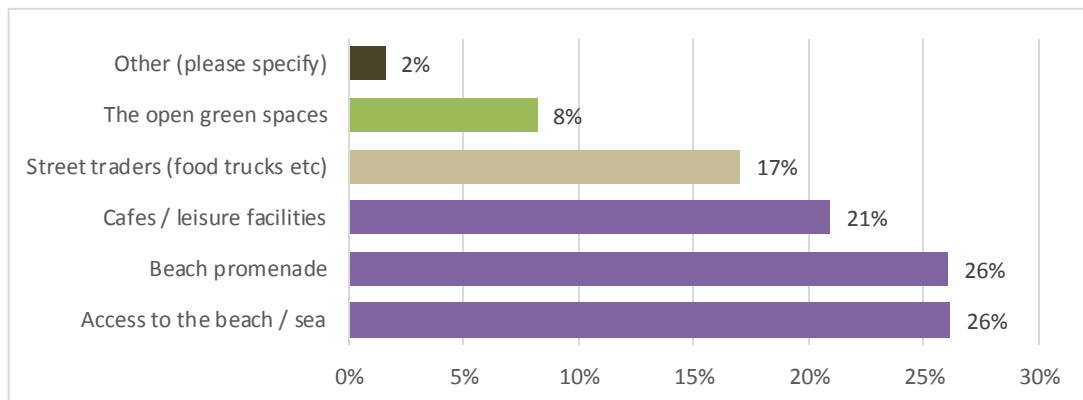


Figure 4: Phase 2 South – Most Popular Reasons For Visiting

3.17 The top suggestions for improvements to this area are shown in Figure 5, with the top 3 suggestions being to make more of the street trading environment, to improve access to the beachfront and to improved seating. Other comments

requested improved toilets and changing facilities, retention of car parking, and improved public transport.

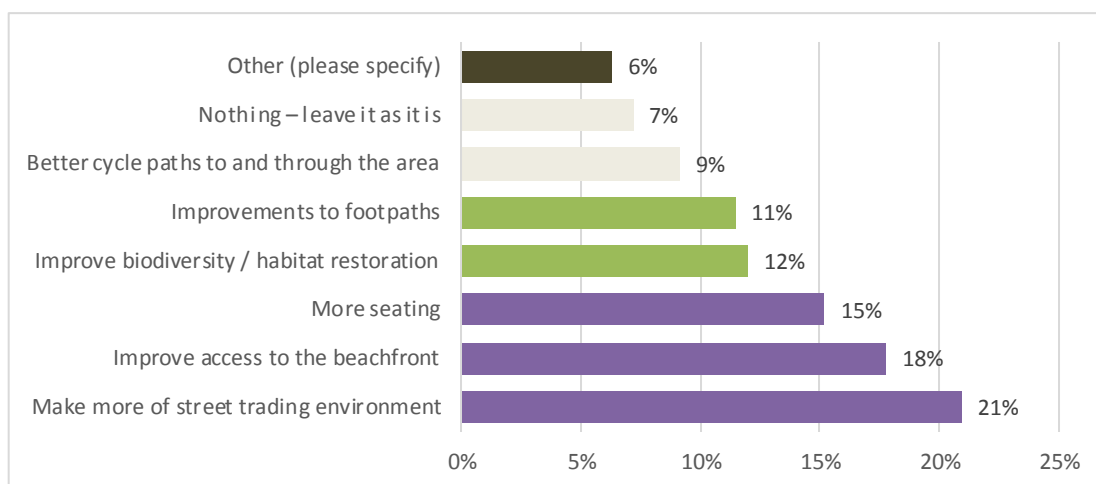


Figure 5: Phase 2 South – Most Popular Suggestions for Future Improvement

3.18 In terms of next steps for the Beach Phase 2 areas, it is recommended that Officers prepare a Development Framework for these areas. This exercise would reflect on the responses to the recent engagement exercise and consider at a high level a defined spatial framework for Phase 2 of the Beach, directly related to the proposals within Phase 1 which have already been through a similar strategic masterplanning exercise. The Framework exercise would review and appraise local context in order to create a vision for the future of these areas, as part of the wider City Centre and Beach Masterplan context, and would also take cognisance of the Aberdeen Harbour Masterplan prepared by the Port of Aberdeen in 2020. The precise red line boundary of Phase 2 would be established as part of this exercise. The Framework would also take into account the recent report to the Licensing Committee on the street traders / foot trucks in Phase 2 South (COM/23/189) and consider what opportunities may be available to build on the success of this area in the future.

Programme

3.19 Looking ahead, Section 8 of the CCBMP Update includes a review of the indicative delivery programme and estimated timelines for project delivery. Members are asked to note that the detail in this section will evolve as project detail progresses, likely resulting in projects being delivered in sequence rather than simultaneously, as impacts on city centre operations are mitigated. Bi-annual reports to the Council's Finance and Resources Committee will provide further progress updates on the first phase of City Centre streetscape projects (Union Street Central, Market Streetscape (Phase 1) and Upperkirkgate / Schoolhill) as these move towards starting on site next year.

3.20 In terms of the next 12 months and beyond, the Masterplan sets out the following key steps / programme:

- Aberdeen Market – determination of revised planning application and, if permission granted, progression of technical design work to allow start on site in 2024.
- Union Street Central, Market Streetscape (Phase 1) & Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate – Union Street Central start on site anticipated early 2024, with commencement of Market Streetscape (Phase 1) and Schoolhill / Upperkirkgate works to follow.
- Union Street East / Castlegate & Justice Street, Union Street West & West End and Market Streetscape (Phases 2 and 3) - Full Business Case to be reported back to Full Council in December 2023.
- Union Street Empty Shops – commencement of short-term interventions identified in the Action Plan and establishment of the Union Street Empty Shops Grant Scheme Review Panel to make, manage and disburse funding awards to successful applicants under the Scheme.
- Queen Street – subject to Outline Business Case and preferred option being approved (see separate agenda item) then work will begin on a Full Business Case including more detailed market engagement.
- George Street – a Final Mini Masterplan will be reported to Full Council by December 2023 and will include recommendations on priority projects.
- Beach Public Realm – subject to Full Business Case for Phase 1A being approved (see separate agenda item), start on site scheduled for late 2023 / early 2024. Continued progress on Full Business Case and contract close for the Public Realm Phase 1B, plus Outline Business Case for Phase 1C. Progression of City-Beach Connectivity Project.
- Beach Ballroom – working towards production of Outline Business Case.
- Proposed Stadium and Leisure – working towards production of a Full Business Case, with demolition of existing leisure facility programmed for early 2024.

Monitoring

- 3.21 Monitoring the City Centre and Beach Masterplan helps us to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the strategies, projects and actions outlined within the document and is also important to ensure accountability and transparency. Monitoring can provide valuable data and insights, allowing us to highlight what is working/progressing well and to identify emerging trends, but also allow us to consider any challenges that may not have been initially anticipated.

- 3.22 Monitoring progress requires an understanding of the baseline conditions and what the key objectives are that the Council wants to achieve. A set of SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Timely) Objectives with metrics and owners was therefore included in the City Centre and Beach Masterplan in order to deliver against the four Masterplan strategic objectives of Economy, Inclusion, Net Zero and Quality. The full suite of SMART Objectives were included in Appendix 1 of the Masterplan report, and a review exercise has been undertaken to look at what current data is available in comparison with the baseline, and to establish if any trends can be identified. This update is presented in Appendix 1 to this report. In summary, it is too early to comment on any established trends due to limited data availability. However, there is some early evidence of reductions in both CO2 and NO2 emissions, In future reports we will comment in more detail on trends as they become evident.
- 3.23 It is the intention of officers to continue to treat the City Centre and Beach Masterplan as a “live” document and ensure it is kept under review. Should report recommendation 2.3 be approved then officers will provide a further update report to Full Council after the next 12 months.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The original funding commitment made by the Council Budget meeting on 10 March 2021 was for £150m from the General Fund Capital Programme over financial years 2021/22 to 2025/26 to ensure the Council transforms the City Centre and the Beach area. This £150m funding commitment was used as match funding to secure the £20m from the UK Government’s Levelling Up Fund in 2021.
- 4.2 Updated financial modelling approved by the Council Budget meeting in March 2023 amended the financial envelope for Phase 1 of the City Centre and Beach Masterplans to £143m. Ongoing costs for the review and monitoring of the City Centre and Beach Masterplan, and costs for the preparation of a Development Framework for Phase 2 of the Beachfront, will be met from these existing budgets. Additional budgets for further phases have been modelled into the 15 year long term capital planning up to 2037/38 and will be subject to future Council budget decisions.
- 4.3 The Council will continue to facilitate the next phase of design works with Hub North Scotland Limited and the supply chain of current contractors who will undertake works relating to two or more workstreams allowing lower cost.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The City Centre and Beach Masterplan informs the consideration of planning applications, but each application will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Authority.
- 5.2 As project proposals from the Masterplan report progress, they will be examined and managed within the professional scope of property / conveyancing industry

accepted standards, ensuring all due diligence exercises and pre-contract enquiries are complete and satisfactory.

5.3 Any work that is recommended to a property not owned by the Council will require effective dialogue and the owner's consent before it can commence. Other local authority consents, such as planning permission and listed building consent, may also be required for works to buildings.

5.4 All changes to vehicular movement on the road network are subject to statutory processes.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. The City Centre and Beach Masterplan has been screened through the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process and the consultation authorities have confirmed that no Environmental Report specific to this overarching Masterplan is required. Individual plans, programmes and strategies falling out of the Masterplan will be considered individually, as will any requirements for project-specific Habitat Regulations Appraisals (HRAs).

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Not delivering CCMP and Beach projects	Full programme of works developed, funding approvals in place at key stages	L	Yes
Compliance	ETRO/TRO challenges	Manage through ongoing engagement programme	M	Yes
Operational	Sufficient capacity of resources within Councils teams to meet programme objectives	Forward planning through CCMP and Beach project delivery programme Resource review ongoing and augmented support through the PMO	M	Yes

Financial	Budget pressures due to current market volatility	Robust budgets established. Independent monitoring process established. With PMO early supply chain mitigations action plan established across the programme	M	Yes
Reputational	Continued debate without decision, ongoing uncertainty over city centre and beach future	Agree and implement projects, clear communications, articulate vision	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Air quality improvement Active travel Local material supply	Incorporated into project proposals. Early engagement underway with material suppliers	M	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Supports the delivery of Economy Policy Statement 4 – Increase city centre footfall through delivery of the City Centre Masterplan. 1. – Continue to maximise community benefit from major developments.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 1 - 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 7 - Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 14 - Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate Supports Outcome 15 38% of people walking

	and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The report supports the priorities in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) investment in infrastructure, regenerating our city centre, unlock development potential, improve the deployment of low carbon transport, to enable Aberdeen to realise development opportunities in the City Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>The report supports the National, Regional and Local Transport Strategies, particularly the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, which prioritises the needs of those walking, wheeling and cycling above other road users, and the 4 pillars identified in the recent Regional Transport Strategy, Nestrans 2040: Equality, Climate, Prosperity and Wellbeing.</p> <p>It also supports the Aberdeen Active Travel Plan and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, both of which seek to improve conditions for people walking and cycling in Aberdeen, particularly to, from and within the City Centre, through the provision of more and safer infrastructure.</p> <p>Measures to reduce unnecessary vehicle traffic in the City Centre will support the Air Quality Action Plan, Climate Change Plan, Net Zero Action Plan and Low Emission Zone by contributing to emissions reduction.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Undertaken as part of separate project update reports
Data Protection Impact Assessment	N/A
Other	Strategic Environmental Assessment

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Adjourned Meeting of Full Council, 25 August 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=8436>
- Decisions of Adjourned Meeting of Full Council, 25 August 2022
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g8436/Decisions%2025th-Aug-2022%2014.00%20Council.pdf?T=2>
- City Centre & Beach Masterplan
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s135130/CCMP%20-%20Appendix%20-%20-%20City%20Centre%20Beach%20Masterplan%202022.pdf>
- City Centre Masterplan
<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018-06/Aberdeen%20City%20Centre%20Masterplan%20and%20Delivery%20Programme.pdf>
- Beachfront Phase 1 Development Framework
Part 1:
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s143975/Appendix%201%20Final.reduced%20part%201.pdf>
Part 2:
<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s143976/Appendix%201%20Final.reduced%20part%202.pdf>

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: City Centre and Beach Masterplan – Updates to Section 6, 8 and Appendix 1

Appendix 2: Beach Development Framework Phase 2 – Consultation Report

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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