

Report to:	CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	John Greenbank, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser
Date of meeting:	15 November 2023

BEACH MANAGEMENT AND COASTAL DEFENCE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 To consider an update on the work undertaken by the Beach Management and Coastal Defence Scrutiny Review Panel meeting on 19 September 2023.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To consider the update, the recommendations made and identify any further work to be undertaken on Beach Management and Coastal Defence

3.0 Reason for recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure the Committee has an overview of ongoing work.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority

5.1 The relevant Council priority is:

'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'

6.0 Background and key information

6.1 On 19 September 2023 members of the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee held a scrutiny review panel meeting to consider proposals in relation to Beach Management and Coastal Defence.

6.2 Councillor Simon Cartmell chaired the meeting with the following members in attendance;

Councillor Emma Ellison
Councillor Adrian Hoyle
Councillor Julie Jones

Councillor Mel Fenlon
Councillor Alistair Humphries

6.3 Councillor Jane Hugo, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Mr John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, Ms Clare Nolan-Barnes, Head of Coastal and Environmental Partnerships and Mr Marcus Philips, Consultant, Jacobs, were also in attendance.

6.4 The meeting heard that climate change had been having a significant impact on Blackpool's beach and coastal areas. This included the loss of sand, rising levels of seawater and the need to upgrade coastal defences to cope with stormier weather. The cost of not taking any action in relation to this challenges was recognised as having substantial negative impacts on Blackpool's residents, businesses and the overall image of the town as a tourist destination.

6.5 In 2012 the Council agreed a Coastal Strategy which identified proposed works and schemes for the next one-hundred years. However since this time more rapid change to the coastal environment had taken place than originally expected and therefore the timescale for the commencement of a number of vital projects had been accelerated to begin during 2022-2027.

6.6 To enable this the Council had secured £150m in investment from the Environment Agency to undertaken Beach Management and Coastal Defence work. The review panel received a presentation detailing the challenges faced along Blackpool's coastline and the work proposed and details of how funding had been allocated.

6.7 Protection of Blackpool's beaches would be primarily achieved by the installation of rock groynes on beaches which would capture sand carried in by the tide and prevent its loss. The importance of the beaches in protecting approximately three thousand five hundred properties in Blackpool and preserving coastal environments, in addition to their value to tourism, was highlighted.

6.8 The proposed schemes highlighted at the meeting were;

- Anchorsholme Coast Protection Variation - Funding had been sought to place rock groynes due to lowering of the beach with an estimated costs £10m variation to be sought in September 2023.
- Bispham Coast Protection – Outline Business Case had been approved and £61m allocated, ground investigation to commenced in Autumn 2023, with design

work planned for 2024 and construction planned for late 2024 – 2027

- Blackpool Beach Nourishment – Preparation of Outline Business Case completed in 2022 was approved and £57m allocated
- Realignment of ‘sea bees’ defences - Outline business case was to be prepared by the end of 2023 with an overall estimated cost of £7m for the project
- Starr Hills Environmental Works (Sand Dunes) - Outline business case approved December 2021 with works ongoing with an allocation of £999,000 between 2022 and 2027

6.9 The Panel noted that detailed business cases were still required for the schemes outlined at the meeting. Members therefore asked that an update be provided to members in six-months’ time.

6.10 Concern was raised at the meeting regarding the need to conduct major works on beaches in the central area during the summer season, noting the disruption that this could cause to tourist attractions and impact visitor experiences. This had been noted by officers and advised that they had been mindful of the impact on the visitor economy and that disruption would be minimised where possible. It was also stated that confining works outside of the summer season was impractical and that winter weather would make working condition harder.

6.11 While recognising the impact on tourism, officers emphasised that the main benefit of the work was the protection of residents and the need to start work in a timely manner to secure funding and ensure the coast was future-proofed against climate change. The importance of community engagement was therefore highlighted with members asking that details of what would be taking with members of the community to be included in the proposed update to the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee in six months’ time.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 That an update on Beach Management and Coastal Defence work be provided to members in six months’ time, including details of the community engagement planned.

7.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

8.0 List of appendices

8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations

9.1 Highlighted within the main body of the report.

10.0 Legal considerations

10.1 None.

11.0 Risk management considerations

11.1 None.

12.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people

12.1 None.

13.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations

13.1 Highlighted within the main body of the report.

14.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken

14.1 None.

15.0 Background papers

15.1 None.