

CABINET Tuesday, 07 June 2022

Subject	Resilient Coasts Project
Report by	Councillor David Ritchie Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	Aldeburgh & Leiston Deben Eastern Felixstowe Gunton & St Margarets Harbour & Normanston Kessingland Kirkley and Pakefield Lothingland Rendlesham and Orford Southwold Western Felixstowe

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

- 1. Give an overview of the Resilience Coasts project
- 2. Update and inform the cabinet members
- 3. That Cabinet approve the Outline Business Case for the Resilient Coasts Project.
- 4. That Cabinet accept the role as lead authority and the financial responsibility and scrutiny of £9.1m, supported by the additional scrutiny of GYBC's Environment Committee.

High level Overview:

The Resilient Coasts project will deliver practical solutions to deal with climate change and sea level rise that are co-created and implemented by communities along East Suffolk and Great Yarmouth coastal frontages. The project aims to facilitate a sense of ownership that increases community resilience to tidal flooding and coastal erosion.

High risk communities with no resilience options will benefit from a suite of innovative tools that will allow them to plan and transition in response to coastal change to viable, sustainable places whilst delivering wider outcomes of local plans and strategies. Through eight work packages we will create much needed tools and options for those affected by coastal change so we can co-create new community-led resilience master plans. (see diagram below).



Our project will add value to traditional coastal management and planning approaches and go beyond other resilience work initiatives by offering the first dedicated joint UK erosion and tidal risk resilience project. This will generate significant learning locally, nationally, and across public and private sectors. The project will provide evidence for policy change and underpin how coastal practitioners manage the

coast as we learn to adapt to coastal change now and in the future.

The £9.1m Resilient Coast project is funded by the Defra and Environment Agency (EA) Flood and Coast Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) and is one of 25 projects across England to be funded and one of only 5 dedicated coastal projects.

The draft Outline Business Case is currently being technically reviewed by the EA assurers and it has been proposed that East Suffolk Council act as Lead Authority for the project in partnership with Great Yarmouth Borough Council with work being delivered by the

Coastal Partnership East officers. Additional resources to support project delivery will be necessary and paid for by the FCRIP fund.

Although the Environment Agency (EA) has already given approval for the project to commence and allocated the funding the project requires, government processes stipulate that we must submit a detailed Outline Business Case for technical 'assurance' by the EA's national panel. When this process has been completed, we will have approval to move into the delivery phase and claim the remaining funding over the course of the project.

The project will focus on finding practical solutions to enable adaptation to coastal erosion, flooding and climate change risk. The funding is not available to spend in locations that already have flood and coastal solutions through existing funding routes.

The project's work will be focused on four core pilot locations and the outputs will also feed-in to three 'twin' locations. These are:

- Southwold, a defended coastal town between the mouth of an estuary at flood risk and soft eroding cliffs- focus is on the transition between hard defences and soft/natural coast where defences.
- Hemsby, an undefended coastal resort with properties at risk behind an eroding sand dune with significant environmental designations.
- Great Yarmouth, a defended urban zone at flood risk with areas of uneconomic frontage that need resilience solutions and potential for enhanced biodiversity and alternative flood management solutions.
- Thorpeness, a partially defended rural coastal heritage village at both erosion and flood risk

The twin locations are:

- The undefended cliff top community in Pakefield at significant erosion risk.
- The rural community at erosion risk in Shotley Gate within an estuary environment.
- The area from Corton to Gunton, with key infrastructure, holiday parks, failed historic coastal defenses and a village at future erosion risk.

Wider coastal community benefits;

Outside the pilots and twins we aim to work strategically with communities across the whole East Suffolk and Great Yarmouth frontage to establish coastal change science and potential impacts and raise awareness about coastal risk.

We will develop and share visualizations of future coast scenarios to support community understanding of the constraints and opportunities for a resilient coast to support future discussions when coastal impacts increase. We will share new coastal erosion risk mapping to support planning and development decisions.

We will also be engaging infrastructure and third-party asset owners to establish where infrastructure is located along the whole coast and work with these partners to establish

longer term investment plans that support more resilient infrastructure for our coastal communities and economies for the future.

We will be exploring the natural capital of our coast and establishing wherever possible ways that support the natural coastal areas and potential funding routes to enhance biodiversity and local nature recovery.

Governance to this stage has been provided by the CPE Board which includes Cllrs David Ritchie and James Mallinder and Senior Officers Nick Khan and Philip Ridley. A Resilient Coast Project Board will be established upon approval of the OBC by the EA and following approval by ESC Cabinet. Wider project Governance is already being established with officers' partners and stakeholders and includes a new Coastal Community group for our pilot locations at Thorpeness, Southwold, Great Yarmouth and Hemsby and will extend to other key coastal communities including Pakefield, Easton Bavents, Corton and Gunton.

The project meets a significant number of ESC Local Plan and Strategy objectives and delivers outcomes across all 5 ESC Strategy themes. The project is aligned with National Defra Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Strategy and LGA Coastal Specialist Interest Group work plans and links to wider government place-making and levelling-up agendas.

Options:

Option 1. To proceed with the Resilient Coasts Project

Option 2. To proceed with the Resilient Coasts Project with Great Yarmouth BC as the Lead authority

Option 3. To not proceed with the Resilient Coasts Project

Recommendations:

- 1. That the Resilient Coast Outline Business Case, attached at Appendix A of the report, be accepted as a basis for a £9.1m programme of innovative coastal adaptation along the East Suffolk and Great Yarmouth coastal frontages.
- 2. That it be acknowledged that the Outlined Business Case approval by the Environment Agency will release the allocation of funding to East Suffolk Council and the Cabinet's approval of the Outline Business Case is therefore required by the Environment Agency to release funds.
- 3. That the role as lead authority and the financial responsibility and scrutiny of £9.1m, supported by the additional scrutiny of GYBC's Environment Committee, be accepted.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

Partial project governance has been established as we developed the OBC. This has been primarily through the existing CPE Member Board and Operational Officers Group which

includes Cllrs David Ritchie and James Mallinder and Senior Officers Nick Khan and Philip Ridley.

A Resilient Coast Project Board will be established upon approval of the OBC by the EA and following approval by ESC Cabinet. Wider project Governance is already being established with officers, partners and stakeholders and includes a new Coastal Community group for our pilot locations at Thorpeness, Southwold, Great Yarmouth and Hemsby and will extend to other key coastal communities including Pakefield, Easton Bavents, Corton and Gunton.

We are seeking additional officer resource and external professional expertise. Through a recruitment campaign and using ESC-approved procurement routes. All additional resources will be fully funded by the FCRIP programme and managed by CPE.

There are already well-established community groups that we already work closely with at the pilot locations and wider coastal communities will also be invited to join the Coastal Community Group to form a strategic stakeholder group.

The Suffolk Coast Forum has provided overview of progress to date and will continue to do so to completion. We have also had verbal support from the Suffolk Coast Acting for Resilience Group.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

East Suffolk Council Constitution

East Suffolk Strategic Plan

East Suffolk Economic Growth Plan

East Suffolk Environment Plan

CPE Business Plan 22-25 (in draft)

Environmental:

Environmental studies and surveys and in some cases a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out as appropriate. Liaison with critical organisations such as the Environment Agency and Natural England and other statuary and non-statuary bodies the project intends to explore natural capital value of the coast and its role in sustainable coastal management for people wildlife and the economy. We aim to develop guidance on biodiversity net gain and link to Nature Recovery Plans.

Equalities and Diversity:

An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken for the project. The development of the appraisal work being undertaken has no impact. This may change as the impacts are further assessed once a preferred option has been identified, particularly if this means a significant change. Any option identified however, will be open to public scrutiny and seeks to enhance and enable inclusive growth and enhance community development.

Financial:

- By accepting the recommendations, Cabinet gives approval for ESC to received £8.4m in total of external funding to deliver the activities set out in this paper.
- This funding will be received over a 5-year period and will be subject to the Environment Agency's financial checks and claims approval processes.

- All income and expenditure will also be subject to the usual internal and external audit and scrutiny processes.
- CPE will also contribute the equivalent of £750k of officer time as an in-kind contribution over the 5-year programme. This will be covered by existing officer team. Salaries for additional posts will be covered by the external funding.
- All income and expenditure will be managed by the project manager in close collaboration with the Head of CPE (Karen Thomas).
- Income and expenditure will also be monitored by Members and senior officers as part of CPE Board, through the project governance structure set out above.

Human Resources:

The project will require additional officer recruitment and we are already advertising for some roles on a 5-year fixed term contract basis. The FCRIP officers will be embedded into the wider CPE teams in ESC and GYBC to ensure learning is shared and we embed new adaptation and resilience approaches across our existing programmes and LA outcomes. The project will also require additional specialist support and we have several partners from public private and academic sectors to support us and our communities over the next 5 years. We will work closely with wider Council service areas and funds area available to support additional resources if required.

ICT:

There are no ICT implications related to the recommendations in this report.

Legal:

No legal implications for the recommendation included in this report are foreseen.

Risk:

The project has a full developed risk register. The new project board will regularly review risks with the project team and partners.

External Consultees:

For ESC we have fully consulted with the community groups at our pilot locations including Thorpeness and are already working on adaptation approaches with groups in Corton, Gunton, Pakefield, Easton Bavents and Southwold. Partners include Anglian Water Groundworks, LGA Coastal SIG, EA, Balfour Beatty, UEA, Marsh, London School of Economics and Zurich. The Suffolk Coast Forum have been updated on progress of the project to OBC and are supportive as are the RFCC and CPE Member Board. National colleagues at the LGA Coastal SIG and Coastal Group network also endorse this work. GYBC Environment Committee and Norfolk Coastal Forum area also in support.

Feedback has been positive, with community members supporting the need for an innovative and focussed approach to adaptation and resilience.

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the <u>Strategic Plan</u> which are supported by this proposal:			Secondary	
(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)			priorities	
T01	Growing our Economy			
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk		×	
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment			
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk			
P04	Business partnerships			
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure			
T02	Enabling our Communities			
P06	Community Partnerships			
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most			
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District		\boxtimes	
P09	Community Pride			
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability			
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services			
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets		\boxtimes	
P12	Being commercially astute			
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities			
P14	Review service delivery with partners			
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation			
P15	Digital by default			
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services			
P17	Effective use of data		\boxtimes	
P18	Skills and training			
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure			
T05	Caring for our Environment			
P20	Lead by example			
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling			
P22	Renewable energy			
P23	Protection, education and influence	×		
XXX	Governance			
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority			
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?				

Growing our Economy

1. Attract and stimulate inward investment

In the 2019 House of Lords Select Committee on the regeneration of coastal towns it was recognised that, to attract inward investment into coastal areas, it is crucial to manage coastal change. Managing coastal change effectively requires a periodic review of evidence, data and policy to ensure that the right decisions are being made for the future of that area and that protection or adaptation maximises opportunities for future growth to the local economy. The proposed Resilient Coasts Project will not only attract FCRIP

funding but also identify new ways to attract inward investment to support coastal change management.

2. Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk

Arguably, the jewel in East Suffolk's crown is its beautiful coast; wild and untouched in some areas and developed to accommodate the growth of coastal communities in others. Whether natural or populated, the coast requires review and management to ensure that actions taken or plans for adaptation enhance this most unique of selling points. The proposed Resilient Coast project will find new ways to re-naturalise our coast and support coastal change as well as ensure evaluation of the natural capital value, so our coastal environment is central to climate adaptation going forward.

Business partnerships

Support and deliver infrastructure

Enabling our communities

P06 Community partnerships- we will support the Community Partnerships approach taken by ESC for the coastal communities we need to work with. We will take a community-led approach to problem solving and enable co-created and co-owned solutions that CPE and ESC officers can facilitate led by those affected most by coastal change risks.

P07 Taking positive action on what matters most.

Our coastal communities need to feel reassured that we are supporting the management of the Suffolk coast. Suffolk has one of the fastest eroding coastlines in western Europe. The 2021 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report recognises the increased risk to coastal communities of increased erosion. The Resilient Coasts project will draw together new and existing evidence to support local decision making to determining option for the future of our coastal communities and businesses. The project will raise awareness of the likely impacts of coastal and climate change and ensure adaptive responses are found to transition the ESC and GYBC coast to a more resilient place for the future.

P08 Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District

The Local Government Association working with Sir Chris Whitty produced a report in 2021 that identified higher than average prevalence of mental health issues in many seaside communities and called on government to support greater understanding and support for this issue. The Resilient Coasts project will be linking with Defra R&D on the impacts of coastal erosion and coastal change on mental health and well being and embedding findings into our work. In addition, the project will work alongside the existing health and safety work of CPE and the Asset Management teams to look at reducing H&S risk from failing assets and consider new ways to recycle or decommission old assets out of the public realm.

P09 Community Pride

Many of our coastal erosion frontages are facing blight. The properties are less likely to be maintained and upgraded and the environment and amenities suffer as erosion impacts the confidence of property owners' businesses and new investors to spend funds on maintenance and improving their 'place'. The Resilient Coast project will support new initiatives to give communities pride in their 'place' and offer solutions to avoid the cycle

of blight and deprivation that affects many seaside locations. (Seaside Towns report 2021).

P10 Organisational design and streamlining services

The Resilient Coasts project will ensure ESC and CPE are in a better position to deliver coastal management services in the face of increased technical and financial challenges presented by climate change and the international economic position. We will have additional support to gather new and existing data and evidence to set out a 30-year vision for coastal management as well as better inform annual and short-term investment plans for our Coast. We will also be working alongside industry specialists to strengthen the skills and capacity of the team and have dedicated resource to progress adaptive rather than reactive approaches to coastal change.

P13 Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities

The Resilient Coasts project is a great example of drawing in grants and funding to support a significant programme of innovation for our coast. Within the project we will also seek to establish ways to create sustainable funding and finance mechanisms so there is a legacy fund after the project to roll out learning across the coast- its hoped we will create a self-financing Coastal Adaptation Fund.

Digital

P17 Effective use of data

We will be using data-led approaches to give us a baseline of our current coastal management issues and opportunities that we can use in discussion with wider council services to inform other service area plans and decisions- notably through a new coastal management spatial map that will be underpinned by new erosion risk data and can support Supplementary planning and coastal change management area planning and investment decisions. This will also be used to inform third party asset owners and developers about the coastal risks we face and encourage early discussions on resilience and adaptive measures that may be needed.

P18 Skills and training

We will improve the knowledge and skills of the Coastal Management workforce in relation to digital through the use of new mapping virtual reality and augmented reality tools that support visualisation of a new and different coast in the future.

Caring for our environment

P20 lead by example

The Resilient Coasts project is one of only 5 coastal projects in the national FCRIP programme to have been allocated funding and is the only project dealing with coastal erosion and its impacts on coastal communities and environment. The work of CPE is considered nationally important by our peers and this project will allow us to take a huge step forward in our adaptation and resilient work to become a national if not international exemplar for coastal change solutions.

P23 Protection, education and influence

As previously mentioned, our coastal communities need to feel reassured that we are supporting the management of the Suffolk Coast. Managing the coast is not necessarily building hard defences; this may not be an appropriate course of action. Coastal

processes, environmental considerations and financial constraints may mean that, longer-term, we will need to work with our coastal communities to create options for an alternative future, an adaptation of their community. Adopting adaptation pathways takes time. Coastal communities need to feel that they are architects of change not victims of change. This means working closely with them to explore data, evidence and potential options.

The proposed Resilient Coasts will support conversations around coastal and climate change and potential options for coastal communities as critical areas of focus. Once we have established routes for communities to adapt, we will be better able to support renaturalisation of key coastal zones in more rural locations that support natural coastal management and SMP policies. We will also endeavour to get the real value of our natural coast to attract investment that supports biodiversity net gain natural capital and nature recovery outcomes.

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1	Background facts
1.1	Ongoing erosion of our coast
	Properties at risk
	Lack of tools we have
	Limited options for communities
	Reaching a point, no further technical and financial solutions
	SIG reports need for adaption and resilience at the coast due to climate change
	FCRIP programme designed to meet the governance flood and coast resilience agenda
	FCERM strategy
1.2	There is an urgency amongst the communities in these areas to move forward swiftly to identify what options are available. Project start for each area was impacted upon by delays caused by COVID 19. However, all projects have made good progress since November 2020 despite those difficult circumstances.
1.3	Thorpeness has experienced long periods of erosion. In 1976 gabion baskets were put in place by Suffolk County Council. In 2010 the community worked with Suffolk Coastal District Council and contributed funds to install geo-textile bags to help slow the erosion to the northern end of Thorpeness beach. This intervention was designed to last up to 20 years. Unfortunately, the increased erosion here has meant that the geo-textile bags have lasted less than 10 years.
	Royal Haskoning DHV were contracted in February 2021 to develop options for this frontage. It is accepted by the local community that any option will not be a long-term solution. The pressure on coastal processes and the need for a defence to be removed before it is detrimental to natural processes, means that the design life will be for no longer than 25 years with continual monitoring.

The well-established community steering group (now a Community Interest Company) are raising funds to progress with a rock revetment.

It is note-worthy that all three projects are part of the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast Transition Programme (NSCT); either as a pilot area or a twinned area. NSCT was awarded £8.4m as a winning bid as part of Defra's Innovative Resilience Fund.

2 Current position

1.4

- Following a successful Expression of Interest to EA in January 2021 and ministerial approval for the project we began progressing an OBC with £40k of funding in June 2021.
 - We have received a further £569k in March this year to fund the work of CPE to date in developing the OBC with our key partners.
 - We submitted a draft OBC on 29th April to EA's assurance team for a technical review.
 - We are now awaiting OBC approval from EA at which point sign off from ES Cabinet will be required.
 - The aim of sharing this paper is to ensure that the ESC and EA approvals processes are aligned to facilitate the project starting in June 2022 which will then run until March 2027.
- 2.2 Establishing a full, clear open, honest and transparent governance structure is crucial to decision making. It is good practice to ensure that decisions made about future coastal management are open to scrutiny, giving confidence to communities and statutory partners such as Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

To date we have sought regular oversight from the CPE Board OOG and Suffolk Coastal Forum and will create a new Board and Governance structure once approvals are in place for the OBC.

2.3 Community projects for Southwold, Corton & Gunton, Pakefield and Thorpeness are developing. They are at a crucial stage and would benefit from the additional funding available from the Resilient Coasts project. These communities are at high coastal management risk and will need to consider different approaches to coastal management that include property replacement relocation and roll back as well as opportunities to enhance access amenities and local environment and economy.

3 How to address current situation

3.1 Option 1: ESC leads the Resilient Coasts project

We think ESC is best placed to lead as it has the capacity and capability to lead a project of the scale and innovation. The majority of CPE officers delivering this project are based in ESC and are well linked to wider local and national teams to take this project forward. ESC arguably has the most open coast communities at imminent erosion risk and well-advanced community approaches with those places and people.

Option 2: GYBC leads the Coastal Resilience project

GYBC is a committed partner to the project and 1/3 of the CPE partnership-however they do not currently have the infrastructure to support this programme of work with key CPE officers already largely based at ESC. We would potentially need to encourage CPE officers into new GYBC roles to manage the project which could lead to ESC losing key staff.

Option 3: We do not proceed with the project

Reputationally we would find ourselves in a difficult position with national and local partners if we were to not progress the project and we would need to return funds already paid. We would have to explain to our willing communities why we cannot take their plans forward for adaptation and CPE's reputation would also be impacted leading to loss of confidence in wider coastal management initiatives and funding opportunities. we would need to continue to manage the coast in a reactive way which is no longer sustainable and there will be ongoing impacts to local people and the economy as well as a missed opportunity to enhance the environment. We also risk losing experienced officers to other more innovative programmes of work elsewhere.

4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1 The implementation of Option 1, that ESC agrees to Lead the project and approve the OBC will allow the partnership to progress the Resilient Coast Project and attract £8.4M external funding into ESC and GYBC for the most at-risk coastal communities and environments.

The project supports vulnerable, eroding frontages where homes and businesses are at risk and that risk heightens each winter. It is therefore essential that we move forward swiftly with identifying new adaptive and resilient options that are technically feasible, environmentally sounds and economically possible.

It will not always be possible to defend eroding frontages. Adaptation pathways will be explored. Long-term master-planning is a sensible approach to give people time to adjust and transition to a change.

The experience of ESC and GYBC local members and officers is aligned with the objectives and ambition of the Coastal resilience programme.

Our communities are ready for this as they are already engaged and willing to take a new approach to coastal resilience.

This is seen as a positive project by local people Suffolk Coast Forum and the stakeholder group SCAR (Suffolk Coast Acting for Resilience).

4.2 ESC through CPE has gathered best practice from coastal projects in East Suffolk such as the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy and the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Project. These projects demonstrate that we can progress schemes to manage erosion risk on a place-by-place basis but it's very resource hungry and we now need a more strategic approach to engage people about broader climate

and coastal change messages as well as create the architecture for new innovative approaches so we no longer solely rely on emergency response and short-term solutions.

By taking a more strategic and longer-term approach in Resilient Coasts our communities and partners are reassured that decision making will be based on good evidence and we hope a broader range of options and outcomes can be made available and delivered.

Appendices

Appendices:		
Appendix A	'Resilient Coasts' FCRIP Outline Business Case	
Appendix B	DRAFT CPE Business Plan	
Appendix C	Norfolk and Suffolk Coast Transition Plan Expression of Interest	

Background reference papers:				
Туре	Available From			
Shoreline Management Plan 7 – Lowestoft Ness to	Shoreline Management Plan 7			
Landguard Point	(suffolksmp2.org.uk)			
Pakefield progress report	www.coasteast.org.uk/projects			
Thorpeness progress report	www.coasteast.org.uk/projects			