

# **Executive Committee**

## **15 December 2016**

### **Lyme Regis Environmental Improvements Phase V, Strengthening and Renovation of the Cobb. Application for Funding for Lead in Work**

#### **For Decision**

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr J Russell – Environmental and Assets

**Senior Leadership Team Contact:** M Hamilton, Strategic Director

**Report Author:** D Wilson, Project Engineer

#### **Statutory Authority:**

The Council's responsibilities and authority are through the Coast Protection Act 1949 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To seek Council funding and authorise officers to carry out monitoring of structure movements and develop engineering proposals for the strengthening and renovation of Lyme Regis Cobb, a West Dorset District Council owned nationally important Grade 1 Listed Structure.

#### **Officer Recommendations**

- 2 That Council approves a budget of £200,000 over 3 years for preparatory work on the proposed scheme. Funding to be drawn from corporate projects reserves.
- 3 That Officers are authorised to progress the preparatory work including appointment of consultants and contractors.
- 4 To return to Committee to discuss funding options once the results of the preparatory works are known

#### **Reason for Decision**

- 5.1 As owner and coast protection authority, the Council is responsible for maintenance and repair of the Grade 1 Listed Cobb harbour structures to an appropriate standard.
- 5.2 To advance implementation of the proposed final phase of the Council's Lyme Regis Environmental Improvements Scheme, which will enable the

Cobb to remain in safe use as a historic harbour and a vital part of the town's coastal defences.

## **Background and Reason Decision Needed**

- 6.1 The Cobb is a working harbour, an important historic structure, a major tourist attraction and a fundamental element of the town's coast defences. The harbour structures, with their rock extensions, form a bay which protects the town frontage from storm waves and keeps the sand and shingle beaches stable.
- 6.2 Progressive movement of the structure is ongoing and this is apparent in longitudinal cracking and slab separation in both the low and high walkways as the main wall gradually spreads. Cracks and damage to wall facing are also apparent and raise concern over loss of core material and sudden collapse during storm conditions.
- 6.3 The Council has promoted restoration and strengthening of the Cobb structures as Phase V of its Lyme Regis Environmental Improvements Scheme since the early 1990s. The viable elements of the first four phases are effectively complete. Defra's letter of 21 November 2003 approving the Lyme Regis Coast Protection Strategy stated "This agreement excludes the estimated capital cost of £3.5 million for Phase V pending the Council's consideration of alternative funding sources given that much of the cost is for heritage/tourism purposes rather than coast protection".
- 6.4 The Council requested that funding should be included in the Environment Agency's Medium Term Plan to cover the coast protection elements of Phase V, with the intention that this sum will be adjusted and advanced in the programme as more detailed and reliable information about the proposals and funding contributions becomes available.
- 6.5 Major strengthening work to parts of the structure, comprising piling and underpinning of sections of the footings, reinforcement of the walls with stainless steel rods and masonry repairs, were last carried out in the 1980s. Since then the Council has carried out ad-hoc repairs, adding to the patchwork of surfaces making up the low walkway. Some areas are very uneven and it is not always practical to meet conservation requirements and eliminate possible trip hazards. More comprehensive repairs to the surfaces cannot be implemented until the Phase V scheme has been determined.
- 6.6 Several injuries due to trips are reported each year and the surface is difficult and uncomfortable for wheelchair users. Fish landing facilities are poor.
- 6.7 Monitoring and structural investigations, partly funded by English Heritage and the Environment Agency, show the structures overall to have been reasonably stable over the last few years and the 1980s strengthening work to be intact and effective.

6.8 The most frequent problem has been storm damage to the low walkway. Heritage requirements and limited maintenance funding make strong, durable repairs difficult and the overall condition of the surfaces has been gradually deteriorating. £170,000 in government emergency grant was spent on repairs and advice from English Heritage following the 2014 storm damage with the repairs also being used as a trial of methods and materials for Phase V.

6.9 On 11 November 2014 the then Director of Environment submitted a Report titled “Lyme Regis Phase 5, Strengthening and Renovation of the Cobb” to Executive Committee. The Report presented 3 options:

Option 1, Do Nothing – This would lead to rapid decline of the structures and walking surfaces, loss of reputation, risk of prosecution, injury claims and structural collapse. The Cobb’s harbour and coast protection functions would soon be compromised.

Option 2, Do Minimum – Continuing to carry out basic monitoring and urgent repairs, taking advantage of any outside funding available, may be tenable for a few years. The gradual decline in condition of the structures and walking surfaces would continue, leading to a corresponding increase in the risk of major storm damage and collapse.

Option 3, Work Towards Implementing Phase V – This would include:

- detailed structural studies and monitoring
- production and assessment of scheme options
- review of historical reports and preparation of a Statement of Significance and Assessment of Heritage Impact
- financial assessment
- public consultation
- selection and development of a preferred scheme
- outline design and estimates
- applications for formal consents
- production of a Project Appraisal Report
- statutory consultation
- securing funding/financial contributions
- application to the Environment Agency for formal approval and grant

6.10 Executive Committee determined to support in principle Option 3, the preparatory work to advance the proposed Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Phase V scheme. To facilitate this option the Committee also determined that a bid of £200,000 be included in the Corporate Priorities after May 2015.

6.11 Further background information is included in the Report to Executive Committee 11 November 2014 “Lyme Regis Environmental Improvements, Phase V”.

6.12 When the preparatory work is sufficiently advanced, Council agreement will be needed for publication of public notices, completion of statutory consultation and an application to the Environment Agency for technical approval and Defra grant in aid for Phase V. Council approval will also be

necessary for the funding arrangements for detailed design, procurement and implementation of the Phase V works.

- 6.13 A decision is needed in order to provide the necessary funding and to authorise Officers to progress preparatory work on the project.

## Implications

### Corporate Plan

- 7 The Lyme Regis Phase V – Strengthening and Renovation of the Cobb scheme meets Corporate Plan Priorities C2 – Protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment, and C3 – Managing the implications of climate change, including flooding and coast protection.

### Financial

- 8.1 The current budget estimate for the preparatory work, excluding Council staff costs, is £200,000:

	<u>(£000)</u>
Site investigation & structural monitoring	55
Heritage assessment & Heritage Partnership Agreement	50
Options study, outline design and estimates	45
Consent Applications	10
Project Appraisal Report and grant application	<u>40</u>
TOTAL	<u>200</u>

- 8.2 Expenditure profile would likely be spread over 3 years as follows:

2016/17	£15,000
2017/18	£85,000
2018/19	£100,000

- 8.3 Contributions will be sought from the Environment Agency and Historic England towards the cost of investigation and monitoring.
- 8.4 The extent, programming and costs of the Phase V works are extremely uncertain. Lyme Regis Coastal Strategy 2003 gives a budget estimate of £3.5m, although given inflation and deterioration of the structures this budget figure has been increased.
- 8.5 The Environment Agency has included indicative funding in year 9 (2025/26) and year 11 (2027/28) of its Medium Term Plan, for the coast protection elements of the work. This allocation could be advanced in the programme as the quality of information about the scheme improves. Any costs not covered by Environment Agency administered grant or Local Levy will fall to the Council and will need to be considered once the investigatory works are complete. Council contributions may be reduced if other funding sources can be identified.

### Equalities

- 9 The joint councils' standard clauses are included in contracts.

## **Environmental**

- 10 Environmental considerations are covered within the consultation processes and scheme option assessment. The required consents are applied for and complied with. If necessary an Environmental Impact Assessment will be produced. Environmental requirements are included in contracts and checked during work on site.

## **Economic Development**

- 11 The proposal is not likely to lead to significant increases in skills, employment or the number of businesses. There will be some short-term disruption during construction work, but maintaining the Cobb in good condition will benefit local traders, commercial fishermen and other harbour users.

## **Risk Management (including Health & Safety)**

- 12.1 Safety risks during the day to day operation of the Cobb are managed under the Council's procedures and insurances.
- 12.2 Risk assessments are required and risk management meetings are held with consultants and the main contractor throughout the investigation, design and construction process. Scheme option assessments include risks.
- 12.3 The Council's contractors and consultants are required to hold appropriate insurances.
- 12.4 At this stage the costs, both for the lead-in work now proposed and for the Phase V works, are extremely uncertain. Work on marine structures in such an exposed tidal environment carries high financial and physical risks. As the proposals develop, appropriate contingencies are included in estimates.
- 12.5 Forms of contract are used that clearly allocate risks between the Council and its contractors.

## **Human Resources**

- 13 Present Council engineering staffing is sufficient for the management of both the preparatory work and for the construction of Phase V.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 13.1 Proposals and progress are discussed at public Lyme Regis Coastal Forum meetings, arranged by the town council. A separate public meeting may be arranged at the Planning/Listed Building consent application stage.
- 13.2 Brief press releases will be issued at key stages of the project.
- 13.3 Consultees include the Environment Agency, Historic England, Dorset County Council, Natural England, Lyme Regis Town Council, local

residents (Lyme Regis Coastal Forum) and the Marine Management Organisation.

- 13.4 If formal Marine Management Organisation consent is required for the works there are additional “statutory consultees”.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

Report to Executive Committee 11 November 2014 “Lyme Regis Environmental Improvements, Phase V”.

## **Footnote**

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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