

Cabinet

5 April 2022

Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 Outline Business Case

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): Seat currently vacant.

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

The Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 is the strengthening and improvement project for The Cobb structure. The scheme involves the stabilisation of The Cobb harbour arm, an improved working environment on the fish landing quay, improved utility services to the businesses upon the Cobb and resurfacing at key locations.

This cabinet paper seeks approval of the outline business case for the proposed scheme for which significant funding is being sought from Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy sources.

Recommendation:

1. Agrees the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 Outline Business Case (Appendix A).
2. Authorises for the submission of the Outline Business Case to the Environment Agency's National Project Assurance Board.
3. Authorises the use of allocated S106 derived funds as contributions toward the scheme construction costs.
4. Authorises officers to progress the scheme to its completion, including construction, pending necessary expenditure approvals.

Reason for Recommendation:

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.

This project will provide coastal protection to 37 properties as well as maintain the recreational and heritage value of Lyme Bay, and continued operation of Lyme Regis Harbour. The Cobb is an important tourist attraction and its loss would have an adverse effect on the local economy.

Preparatory work has revealed significant signs of scour which is destabilising the structure. Surfacing is generally poor; restricting access for the less-abled, the landing quay is not fit-for-purpose and utility services to the Cobb Buildings and landing quay are in poor condition.

To extend the operational life of The Cobb, repair and reinforcement of the structure need to be undertaken.

1. Report

1.1 Strategic Priority

a) The scheme fits within the priorities of the Dorset Council plan 2020 to 2024. The proposals within the outline business case fit within the Unique Environment priorities of the council, where it has committed to:

- deliver services in ways that protect our natural, historic and cultural environments;
- lead and support communities to respond to climate and ecological change;
- protect Dorset's natural biodiversity; and
- support the Environment Agency on flood protection projects.

b) The scheme is Phase 5 of the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Strategy Plan (2002). See Section 9 (Background papers).

1.2 Background

- a) The Cobb enables a working harbour, is 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.
- b) Progressive movement of the structure is ongoing, and this is apparent in 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 collapse during storm conditions. Scour at the base of walls is evident and widespread, having a destabilising effect upon the structure.
- c) The Council has promoted restoration and strengthening of the Cobb structures as Phase 5 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".
- d) The Council requested that funding should be included in the Environment Agency's Capital Programme to cover the coastal protection elements of Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 (Phase 5), 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.
- e) 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 5 scheme has been determined.
- f) Several injuries due to trips are reported each year and the surface is difficult and uncomfortable for wheelchair users. Fish landing facilities are poor.

- g) 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 5.

1.3 Aims & Objectives

- a) The primary aims and objectives of the Phase 5 scheme are to identify, develop and implement a project, or series of projects to upgrade the Cobb to:
- meet the objectives of the overall Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement (LREI) Scheme in terms of Coastal Protection, as identified in the LREI Strategy Plan (2002).
 - address current maintenance issues and prepare a plan for future monitoring and maintenance.
 - upgrade surfaces and the general Cobb environment including lighting and signage compatible with the current commercial and leisure activities.
 - facilitate ducting of utilities serving the buildings located on the Cobb.

1.4 Scheme Proposals

- a) A preferred option for the Phase 5 scheme was chosen following an extensive options appraisal process. The preferred option includes the following elements:
- Construction of a sheet pile and concrete toe wall on both sides of The Cobb structure at The Causeway, The Gin Shop and The Roundabout areas.
 - Resurfacing of a strip of the low walkway using historically appropriate materials and techniques at The Causeway, The Gin Shop and The Roundabout.
 - Resurfacing of The Landing Quay using modern materials and techniques that are suitable for an active working harbour.

- Improving utility infrastructure to The Cobb buildings and Landing Quay areas.
- Other minor improvements.

1.5 Consultation & Engagement

- A public consultation event was first held in October 2017 which was well attended by representatives from the local community including council members, Lyme Regis Town Council, community groups, licensing bodies and local fishing industry representatives.
- Planning pre-application consultation took place with Council planners and conservation officers in March 2018. These discussions included Historic England and written feedback to outline proposals has been received from them.
- Media press releases will be issued at key stages of scheme development. The project team are working with the Council's Communications team on this matter.
- Future stakeholder engagement is to be managed by Dorset Council with support from the Dorset Coast Forum and guidance from a local stakeholder engagement plan. Future public consultation events will be advertised widely, with participation encouraged, and are expected to commence following the approval of funding by the EA.
- The key consultees on the project are local residents, Dorset Council Harbours Committee, Lyme Regis Harbour master, Lyme Regis Harbour Consultative Group, Lyme Regis Town Council, the Environment Agency, Local Utility providers, Local Fisherman, businesses on The Cobb, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation, numerous adjacent landowners, and multiple service departments within Dorset Council.

1.6 Scheme Delivery

- Dorset Councils Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management team will lead, and project manage the remaining delivery of the Phase 5 scheme. Specialist consultants will provide professional support operating under rigid technical and assurance procedures.

- b) Suitable contractors will be commissioned to deliver the construction phase of the scheme once the preparatory stage is complete.
- c) Schedule of critical milestone dates:
 - Business Case approval – May 2022.
 - Remaining preparatory stage elements completed – June 2023.
 - Award construction contract - August 2023.
 - Work to be started on site - October 2023.
 - Work substantially completed - March 2024.

2. **Financial Implications**

- a) A summary of the main financial details contained within the outline business case can be found below. For a more detailed assessment, please refer to the business case contained within appendix A.
- b) The Outline Business Case proposes to the Environment Agency (EA) National Project Assurance Board, that funding for the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 (The Cobb) is approved at the sum of £3,036k.
- c) Funding for the scheme is made up from £2,561k flood defence Grant-in-Aid (FDGiA) supported by S106 contributions of £475k held by Dorset Council (see below). These cover the appraisal and construction costs associated with the scheme. Future whole-life costs for monitoring and repairs are estimated to be £140k (Present Value) and will need to be covered by Dorset Council.
- d) There is £477.17k available S106 derived funding that can contribute toward the cost of construction. The S106 funds have already been received and allocated for coastal protection works within the Lyme Regis area.
- e) If assurance is given by EA's National Project Assurance Board, then the council can reclaim all costs associated with the development of the outline business case, including consultant fees and council staff time.

3. **Climate Implications**

- a) As the climate warms, storms are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. The phase 5 scheme will strengthen The Cobb structure which will help reduce the impact of storms to the Lyme Regis Coastal frontage, and harbours users.
- b) A carbon modelling tool has been used to produce a high-level whole life carbon assessment for the preferred scheme option. This will be assessed by the Environment Agency.
- c) All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that any subsequent construction scheme is able to reduce its carbon impact.
- d) The regular maintenance and repair to engineering assets is beneficial to their remaining life expectancy and therefore has a lower impact upon the climate than replacement schemes.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- a) The Cobb structure is a popular tourist attraction and its continued operation will allow the public to enjoy walking and sight-seeing upon it.
- b) The repair and renewal of harbour infrastructure also aids commercial and recreational activity that is both marine and land-based.

5. **Other Implications**

- a) There will be an impact to harbour users and businesses during scheme construction. Those affected will continue to be engaged with and mitigation measures put in place to reduce the impact upon them.

6. **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- a) Council engineers have undertaken an initial Equalities Impact Assessment, and this suggests that an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for the submission of the OBC to the Environment Agency.
- b) Council engineers are consulting with equalities officers to ascertain if the Phase 5 construction scheme will require an Equalities Impact Assessment. The initial assessment suggested that the scheme could have a positive equalities impact, except during construction when access to The Cobb structure is likely to be restricted.

8. **Appendices**

- a) Appendix A - Outline Business Case Template for non-EA Risk Management Authorities – LREI Phase 5.

9. **Background Papers**

- a) Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Strategy Plan (2002) - <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/beaches-and-coast/coastal-protection-and-management/coast-protection-in-west-dorset>
- b) Outline Business Case Template for non-EA Risk Management Authorities – LREI Phase 5, appendices A-I.