

Cabinet

17 December 2024

Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme Project Outline Business Case

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Cllr Belinda Bawden

Cllr Bill Trite

Cllr Gary Suttle

Executive Director:

Jan Britton, Executive Lead for Place

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

Dorset Council have submitted a successful Outline Business Case to the Environment Agency to fund an adaptation and resilience project as part of the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme.

The coastal communities of Swanage North and Charmouth are being challenged to adapt to a changing landscape due to sea level rise and weather pattern changes accelerating the risk of coastal erosion and cliff destabilisation.

The Swanage and Charmouth Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) project will support the Government's stated aim to manage down the risk to such coastal communities, and where they cannot be, support those communities to respond and adapt accordingly.

The CTAP project, which runs until March 2027, will deliver a range of options at both Swanage and Charmouth to enable communities to adapt and thrive in light of ongoing coastal change.

This paper seeks endorsement of the outline business case for the proposed project within which £3m of Defra flood defence grant-in-aid funding has been approved to deliver its aims.

Recommendation:

1. Endorse the Dorset Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme Project Outline Business Case (found in Appendix A).
2. Authorises the draw-down of the £3m grant funding, ongoing throughout the project.
3. Approve the procurement of the necessary materials, professional & other services and construction contractor(s) for the project and delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place Services in consultation with the Executive Director Corporate Development and the Cabinet Member for Place Services to award necessary contracts on appropriate terms and subject to a budget being identified and allocated, and that the total value of the contracts within the project should not exceed £3m.

Reason for Recommendation:

The £3m outline business case requires cabinet approval. The recommendations give officers the necessary authority to draw-down the external grant funding and progress the project to the delivery stage.

1. Report

1.1 Strategic Priority

(a) The Council Plan 2024-2029, which at the time of writing has been submitted for approval by Full Council on 5th December 2024 recognises that *'our seaside communities are particularly exposed to rising sea levels which can lead to coastal erosion, flooding, and damage to infrastructure.'* In preparing for the challenges of climate change, *'we are committed to helping our communities, ecosystems, and economies adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change'*, and states that *'by taking the right actions now, we can help address climate change and ensure a safer, more resilient Dorset for future generations.'*

b) *The Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy also has climate adaptation and resilience as one of its 3 main pillars alongside climate emission*

mitigation and combatting the nature emergency. How we continue to adapt to a changing climate will be a key strategic challenge over the coming years for Dorset Council that will require a systems-led approach bringing together partners, communities and businesses from across the county, the wider-region and nationally.

(b) The government policy statement on flooding and coastal erosion, published on 14 July 2020, sets out the government's long-term ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. Alongside the policy statement, the Environment Agency published its new National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, which is also focussed on improving overall resilience to flooding and coastal change, adapting to climate change and provides a framework to guide the activities of those involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management.

1.2 Background

- (a) The Outline Business Case builds upon the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) Strategic Outline Business Case (SOC) that was submitted to the Environment Agency (EA) Large Project Review Group in February 2022. This OBC was approved by the EA in November 2024 for £3m to fund the Dorset CTAP project which is scheduled to run until March 2027.
- (b) The Dorset CTAP project focusses upon Swanage North and Charmouth where the nationally proposed shoreline management plan policies will challenge communities to adapt to an eroding coastline. The Council is the Coast Protection Authority and manages the coast path and rights of way that traverse each location.
- (c) The Dorset CTAP will undertake activities that raise awareness and deliver practical action related to the risks of coastal erosion and cliff retreat and support the communities in adapting to their changing coastlines. The project provides an opportunity to develop, test and implement innovative coastal transition actions that are outside the scope of what central government usually funds and what local authorities are required to do.

1.3 Objectives & Benefits

- (a) There are four key National Programme objectives:

- Produce long-term sustainable strategic plans, by 2027, aligned with the Shoreline Management Plan, and embedded in existing local policy frameworks.
- Test and demonstrate innovative practical coastal transition actions. Practical coastal transition actions will be implemented in locations at significant risk of coastal change.
- The participating authorities will capture evidence, tools and learning from the implementation of innovative practical coastal transition actions and share this learning with other coastal authorities to support coastal transition activities in other locations across the country.
- By 2027, the participating authorities will have improved evidence on the effectiveness of innovative actions to achieve coastal transition, demonstrated by the embedding of learning and approaches in existing FCERM policy and investment decision-making, as well as local-development planning policies in the chosen locations.

(b) The main benefits of the projects include:

- Reduction in risk to life as a result of more proactive transition.
- Reduction in mental and physical health issues linked to residents staying in properties at high-risk from erosion.
- Increased health and wellbeing of coastal residents through retention of recreation and amenity assets.
- Retention and expansion of employment opportunities (direct and indirect) through preservation of businesses, particularly in the tourism sector.

1.4 Project Proposals

- The proposed aims and actions of the Dorset CTAP project include:
- Replacement or redesign of beach access.
- Improving resilience of the Charmouth Heritage Centre to reduce damage and flooding impacts, as well as investigation into the long-term viability of the Centre and proposals for longer term management.
- Undertake activities that support the rolling back of the Charmouth Heritage Centre car park.

- Regular engagement with the communities.
- Developing adaptation plans, including funding mechanisms.
- Build capacity to deliver coastal transition within Dorset in the long-term.
- Support the delivery of the Swanage & Durlston Cliff Management Strategy.

1.5 Consultation & Engagement

- (a) Stakeholder and community engagement are key themes of the Dorset CTAP project. The project has worked in partnership with the Charmouth and Swanage North communities to develop action plans and enhance their understanding of coastal change and increase community preparedness and resilience.
- (b) During the OBC development, collaborative workshops with the CTAP Steering Group, comprising Dorset Council, Dorset Coast Forum, Environment Agency and Jacobs have been held, in addition to stakeholder engagement events with the local communities at Charmouth and Swanage North Cliff.

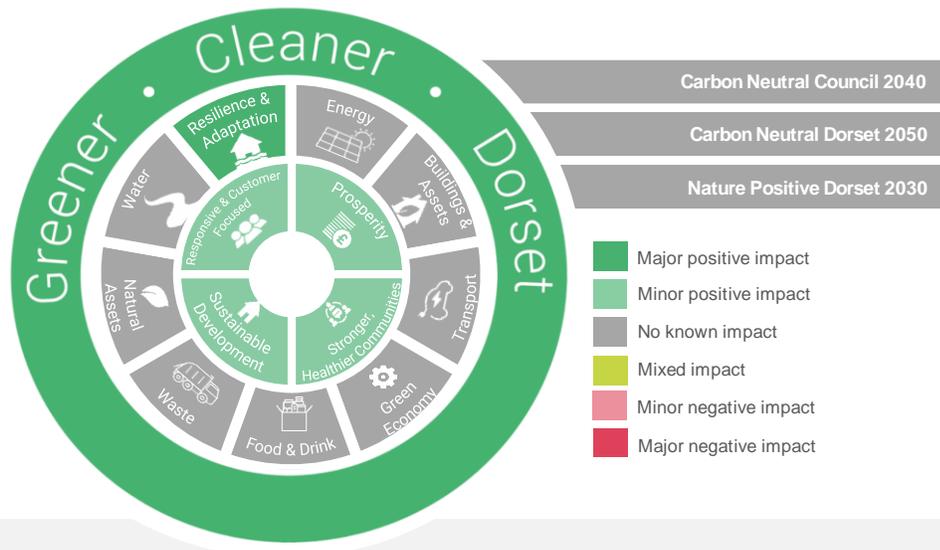
1.6 Project Delivery

- (a) The development of the CTAP OBC was led by the Council and we will continue to act as lead during the development of the CTAP project working closely with wider community groups and key stakeholders.
- (b) The project will be managed by the Dorset CTAP Project Manager. A role funded by the project grant allocation. A project steering group was established during the development of the OBC. The steering is group will provide advice and support to the Project Manager.
- (c) To support project development and delivery it is essential that the project team also engages, interacts and collaborates with a broad range of internal teams, external partners and stakeholders.
- (d) Funding for this project will be administered via the established grant-in-aid draw down process. Any financial and procurement decisions will be made in line with the council's constitution.

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, sections 3 & 5.
- (b) The Outline Business Case proposes to the Environment Agency (EA) Large Project Review Group, that grant funding for the Dorset Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme Project is approved at the sum of £3m.
- (c) No match or partnership funding from Dorset Council is expected for this project. The project is wholly externally funded by the £3m grant.
- (d) The £3m of grant funding must be spent by March 31st, 2027, and includes 30% contingency.
- (e) Project spend is forecast to be largely spread over financial years 2025/26 & 2026/27, with a higher level of spend forecast in the latter.

3. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)		
	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO ₂ (tonnes)	Unknown
2050 - County Emissions	CO ₂ (tonnes)	Unknown

4. Well-being and Health Implications

(a) Part of the intention of the CTAP project is to improve the health and well-being of those living in vulnerable coastal locations through resilient physical access improvements enabling greater use of coastal areas. But also, through a greater understanding of adaptation opportunities it is hoped that this may reduce the potential mental health issues that could be linked to uncertainty of the future impact of coastal erosion on these communities.

5. Other Implications

None

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) An initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA) scoping assessment has been undertaken with agreement that project specific items, such as beach access improvements, will undertake their own full EQiA.

8. **Appendices**

Appendix A - Outline Business Case

Appendix B - Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations

9. **Background Papers**

None

10. **Report Sign Off**

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)