

Cabinet

3 March 2025

Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Cllr G Suttle

Cllr C Tomes

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Jack Wiltshire – Corporate Director Highways & Engineering.

Email: jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

Swanage seafront requires additional protection to provide resilience to flooding and coastal erosion. The primary purpose of this paper is to seek cabinet's approval to bid for £4 million of external funding to replenish beach levels, install a new rock groyne control structure and provide additional protection to the seawall. The recommended approach includes sustaining the effectiveness of the beach and existing groyne structures, which together play a vital role in reducing the risks of coastal flooding and erosion.

Swanage Beach is a key coastal asset that provides flood and erosion protection to the town, supports critical infrastructure and key amenities, and attracts thousands of visitors each year. Protecting the seafront supports economic growth and enhances resilience.

The total project cost is estimated at £4.657m, with a current spend of £460k. This paper seeks additional investment of £190k from Dorset Council in match funding to secure external funding of £4.007m.

The project is in continued alignment with the wider Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) Poole Bay Strategy project, which is fundamental to the delivery approach of the scheme. Ongoing collaboration enables shared efficiencies

and cost savings; without this alignment, these benefits would be lost, and the project would no longer be economically viable to deliver. Project delivery is currently estimated in 2028.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Approve the Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme outline business case.
- 2.2 Approve budget allocation within the Capital programme as detailed in Table 1.0 section 7.
- 2.3 Authorise the submission of the Outline Business Case to the Environment Agency's National Project Assurance Service.
- 2.4 Authorise the draw-down of all external Flood Defence Grant-In-Aid and Local Levy funding, ongoing throughout the project.
- 2.5 That the decision to procure and award the works and associated professional services be delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Place Services.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Scheme delivery is required to provide resilience against coastal erosion and flooding.
- 3.2 National flood funding rules change on 1 April 2026, the outline business case must be submitted before 31 March 2026 to avoid the risk of extensive rework, delays, and additional costs under the new requirements.
- 3.3 The outline business case setting out the £4.987m project requires cabinet approval before it can be considered for external funding.

4. The report

4.1 Strategic priority

- (a) Protection of Swanage seafront is supported by the Dorset Council Plan, "*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.*'
- (b) This scheme aligns with central government's approach which sets out the long-term ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk.

4.2 Background

Swanage's existing coastal defences are deteriorating. Beach levels have been steadily falling, leaving over 110 properties, critical public infrastructure and the local economy at increasing risk from coastal flooding and erosion.

Without intervention, the seawall is projected to fail as early as 2029, leading to rapid shoreline retreat and major loss of residential, commercial and amenity assets.

The outline business case presents a preferred option that delivers long-term protection, strategic alignment with regional programmes and excellent value for money.

4.3 The scheme directly supports:

- National FCERM Strategy (2020): climate resilient places and proactive adaptation.
- Shoreline Management Plan (2011): *Hold the Line* policy for Swanage.
- Poole Bay FCERM Strategy (2014): maintain defences for 100 years.
- Local Plans (Swanage 2017; Dorset 2021): safeguard coastline and economy.
- Swanage Town Council Seafront Masterplan (2023)

4.4 Options appraisal and preferred option

A longlist of 11 options was appraised against strategic, economic, environmental, buildability and carbon criteria. Beach recharge with a new control structure has been identified as the preferred option. This was selected because it:

- Restores the established standard of protection
- Provides the best overall value for money
- Is technically deliverable with lower construction and programme risk than more intrusive alternatives.
- Minimises carbon impacts relative to other engineered options.
- Enables significant cost efficiencies by aligning with the BCP recharge programme, including shared mobilisation and materials.

Please see the full outline business case included in appendix A.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Eleven options were developed and assessed in accordance with Environment Agency Appraisal Guidance and the HM Treasury Green Book, using technical,

environmental, economic and deliverability criteria. Following Multicriteria Analysis and detailed appraisal, a shortlist of viable options was assessed against flood and erosion risk reduction, value for money, environmental impact, buildability and affordability, regulatory and consenting risk.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Dorset Council is the Coast protection authority with the responsibility for carrying out works to protect the coast from erosion and flooding. This responsibility is derived from the Coastal Protection Act 1949 and Flood Water Management Act 2010.

6.2 Regulatory licences will be required from the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation.

7. Financial implications

7.1 £190,000 of Dorset Council capital expenditure is required in addition to the existing project spend of £460k to meet the full £650k contribution commitment. In addition, £330,000 of external Local Levy funding has been secured to complete the remaining pre-construction work in 2026/27. Subject to approval, external Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid funding would be £4 million.

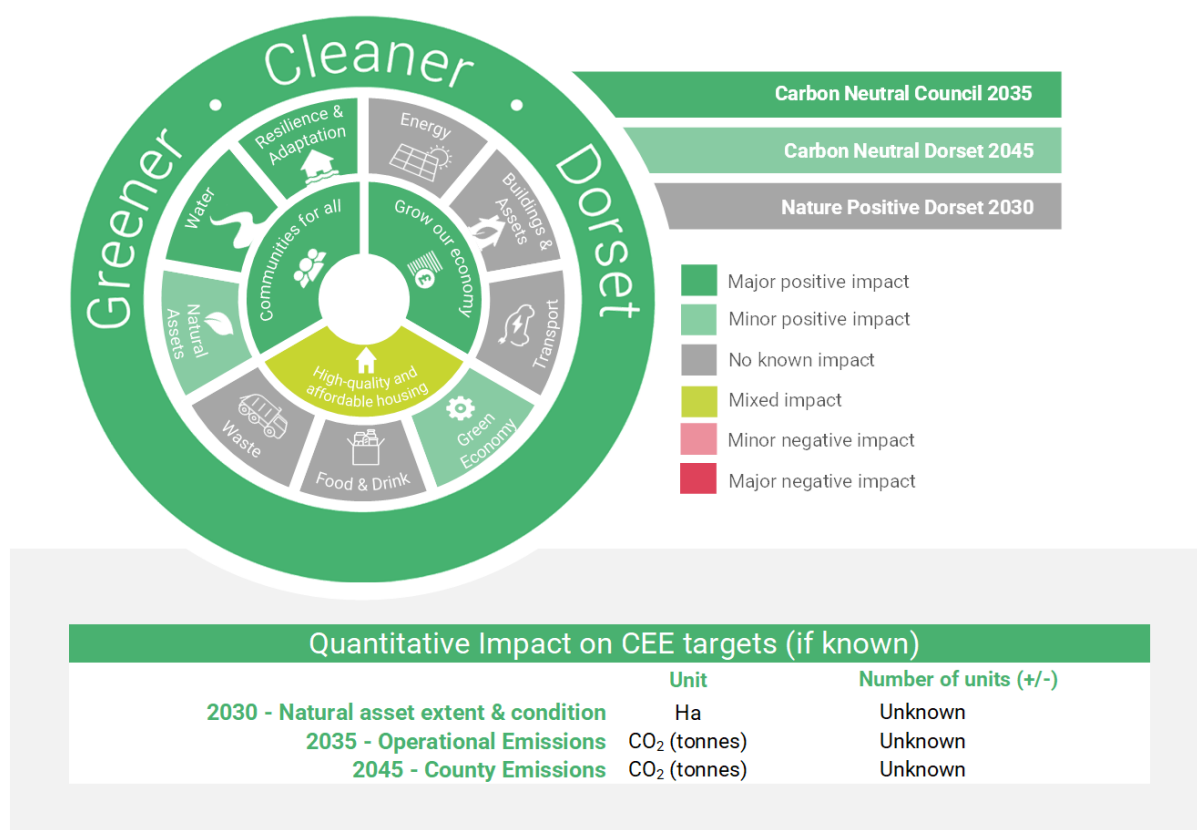
Table 1.0

Funding source	Spend to date	Additional Funding Required	Total
Dorset Council capital	£460k	£190k	£650k
Local Levy (External)		£330k	£330k
Flood Defence Grant-In-Aid (External)		£4,007k	£4,007k
Total			£4,987k

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The design retains as much existing beach material as possible to minimise waste, vehicle movements and use of new materials. The project will increase climate resilience.

8.2 Natural England have had input on relevant environment, habitat and marine conservation zone screenings. Dorset Council will continue to consult with relevant regulatory bodies during detailed design and planning. Dorset Council will implement mitigation measures to minimise ecological impacts on marine habitats and species during construction.



9. Well-being and health implications.

9.1 The return of the beach to previous design levels enables safer access onto the beach, improves beach quality and renews the standard of protection previously established to prevent coastal erosion and flooding. This will allow beach users continued well-being benefits associated with exercise and key amenity usage.

10. Other implications

None identified

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

- 12.1 No adverse effects have been identified.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix A – Outline Business Case
- 13.2 Appendix B – Equality impact assessment
- 13.3 Appendix C – List of acronyms used

14. Background papers

- 14.1 None

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 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)