

Chichester District Council

Environment Panel

29 January 2024

Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

That Environment Panel recommend to Cabinet;

- 2.1 Approval of submission of a business case to the Environment Agency for Grant in Aid (GiA) funding to develop an Investment and Adaptation Plan for Chichester Harbour.**
- 2.2 Preparation and delivery of a Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan to help strengthen the resilience of the communities and environment of Chichester Harbour to flooding and coastal change to the year 2100 and beyond if GiA funding is secured.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Chichester Harbour, covering the shorelines of the Chichester Harbour National Landscape, is a popular, attractive place to live, work and play and one of the most important sites for wildlife in the UK. The entire area is protected under a range of legal designations to safeguard the internationally important wildlife the Harbour supports. Chichester Harbour falls within the boundaries of both Havant Borough Council (the eastern side of Hayling Island, Langstone and Emsworth) and Chichester District Council (Thorney Island to East Head). Land use is mainly rural, with a number of coastal towns and villages scattered around the harbour.
- 3.2 The Council adopted the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) (2010), which sets high-level policies for coastal defence management planning for the next 100 years and recommended a "Hold the Line" policy for the majority of the Chichester Harbour shoreline. These Hold the Line policies within the Harbour, in

some places, are no longer deliverable, affordable or environmentally appropriate, and consequently are in need of review.

- 3.3 The west of the Harbour has an approved and adopted traditional Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy called the Portchester to Emsworth Coastal Strategy (2013). It also has the draft Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy which is currently in development. Such strategies identify the preferred approaches to delivering the SMP policies. However, the majority of the Harbour does not have a traditional Coastal Management Strategy in place. Development of this investment and adaptation plan will enable the review of the appropriateness of current SMP policies and guide coastal management approaches in the future for the entire harbour.
- 3.4 With sea level rise and coastal change, tidal flood and erosion risk to people and property within the harbour will increase over time. Where there are defences, as sea levels rise, habitats are squeezed against these defences, resulting in the loss of important habitats and ecosystems, known as coastal squeeze. The interaction between the different habitats and the features of importance within them is therefore an important consideration in planning the management of coastal flood and erosion risk in this area in the future.
- 3.5 The Chichester Harbour environment is currently in 'unfavourable, declining' condition (Natural England, 2021), due to pressures within the harbour such as coastal squeeze. Natural England estimates that Chichester Harbour has lost over 58% of its saltmarsh habitat since 1946 and continues to lose an average of 2.54 hectares of saltmarsh annually (the equivalent of more than 3 football pitches in area). <https://www.conservancy.co.uk/about-chichester-harbour/pressures-on-chichester-harbour/coastal-squeeze/>.
- 3.6 Replacing and recreating this habitat is a legal requirement of the SMPs through the Environment Agency's Habitat Compensation and Restoration Programme (HCRP). There is therefore a need to identify and progress opportunities for coastal habitat creation within Chichester Harbour as part of this plan. Without a clear plan in place for the future, regulators such as Natural England and the Environment Agency could turn down planning approvals for any new FCERM works in the Solent.
- 3.7 The proposed Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan will be developed in line with the National FCERM Strategy for England (2020), focusing on resilience and adaptation, to help guide the future management of Chichester Harbour's coastline and waters, addressing people, property and environmental challenges in one place. Working together with regulators, stakeholders, landowners and the community, this community led Plan will use an adaptive approach to identify adaptation options for future management in the form of flexible adaptation pathways, defined by triggers for action.
- 3.8 The Plan will aim to identify opportunities and future projects for managing risk to communities as well as opportunities for coastal habitat creation and improvement that can help reduce current pressures and contribute towards a recovering environment.
- 3.9 An important element of this work will be to review SMP policies, updating policy and initiating the SMP policy change process if required.

3.10 This report sets out the proposed next steps for progressing an Investment and Adaptation Plan for Chichester Harbour.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

4.1 This project is in the council's Corporate Plan 2022-2025 approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2024 (point 5.3 - Improve the condition of our harbours, working with Coastal Partners to prepare such a plan for delivering opportunities for habitat and restoration of Chichester Harbour).

4.2 It is anticipated that a bid will be submitted for Grant in Aid (GiA) funding to develop an Investment and Adaptation Plan for Chichester Harbour.

4.3 If funding is secured, Coastal Partners (the Council's coastal team) will lead the joint project on behalf of Chichester District Council and Havant Borough Council, working closely with regulators, stakeholders, landowners and the community to develop an Investment and Adaptation Plan for Chichester Harbour over the next three years.

4.4 The Investment and Adaptation Plan will help guide those who live work and play within Chichester Harbour, plan, and adapt to flooding and coastal change in the future while helping to improve the unfavourable, declining environmental condition of the Harbour. Communities and stakeholders will be at the heart of decision making at all stages of the Plan. A key output will be a delivery plan of short-term projects, overseen by a dedicated delivery management group.

5. Proposal

5.1 That Coastal Partners makes an application to the Environment Agency for GiA Funding to develop an Investment and Adaptation Plan for Chichester Harbour. Estimated cost ~£1.8 million (including risk).

5.2 To enable efficient management of the project, Havant Borough Council, as host of Coastal Partners, will lead the grant claim and administration of funds on this joint project.

5.3 If funding is secured, that Coastal Partners, on behalf of the Council and Havant Borough Council, lead, manage and undertake the work to develop the Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan and delivery plan of short-term resilience projects.

5.4 Development of the Investment and Adaptation Plan has an estimated programme of 3 years.

5.5 Both the Council and Havant Borough Council will be represented on the Project Board, to provide guidance and direction, make key decisions and be accountable for the success of the project.

5.6 At the start of the project a performance monitoring cycle will be established for the project and shared with the partners.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 Do nothing – Under this option no Investment and Adaptation Plan would be developed but business as usual work would continue. There would remain no collaborative plan to guide the future management of Chichester Harbour's coastline and waters, addressing people, property and environmental challenges holistically in light of future climate and coastal change.
- 6.2 Do minimum - Under this option take stand-alone schemes forward. No Investment and Adaptation Plan would be developed. Adhoc management of the shoreline will continue, and projects would be taken forward on a reactive basis. There would be no joined-up plan for the whole Harbour, the harbour environment would continue to decline and engagement with communities and landowners would be on an adhoc basis.
- 6.3 Do something – Under this option develop a traditional Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for the east of Chichester Harbour. Although the Harbour coastline would be covered by three Coastal management Strategies, there would be no joined-up plan for the whole Harbour. The Strategy would mainly focus on people and property, a real missed opportunity for the environment.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 Coastal Partners has a detailed service plan to guide the delivery of its work, including this project, which is signed off by its client board.
- 7.2 The council, as the coast protection authority, is not legally required to do anything to protect against flooding and erosion. However, it has permissive powers to undertake sea defence and coastal erosion works or studies under the Land Drainage Act 1991, Coast Protection Act 1949, and Water Resources Act 1991, and act in the public interest doing so only when there is a clear economic benefit, an appropriate engineering solution which can be achieved and no contravention of environmental legislation.
- 7.3 These works are currently undertaken under s.1 of the Localism Act 2011 (power of general competence), which enables a Local Authority to do anything that individuals generally may do, whether for a commercial purpose or otherwise (with or without charge) for the benefit of its area.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Key statutory consultees including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Chichester Harbour Conservancy and Havant Borough Council will be consulted throughout the life of the project and have already been involved in shaping the need for and scope of the work required.
- 8.2 Throughout the development of the Investment and Adaptation Plan, the community, landowners and wider stakeholders will be encouraged to get actively involved, to allow local decision making, achieve community support and meet local needs.
- 8.3 An engagement and communication plan will be developed at the start of the project and kept live throughout Plan development.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1 Community education and awareness of coastal change risks is key to the success of the project, therefore, a key objective of the plan is to ‘by 2030, increase education and awareness of present and future coastal change within the Harbour, its risks and potential impacts to local ecosystems, communities, recreation, landowners, businesses, and infrastructure’.
- 9.2 The project will champion community empowerment, by ensuring communities and stakeholders are at the heart of decision making at all stages of plan development, helping to foster a real sense of community ownership.
- 9.2 There are however risks and challenges to the journey of delivering an Investment and Adaptation Plan for Chichester Harbour as set out below:
- The need for the project is well understood and supported by the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, the Environment Agency, Havant Borough Council and Natural England, however, as this is a brand-new type of plan, Environment Agency assurance and business case review could be prolonged.
 - Although the project is identified on the Environment Agency’s Capital Investment Programme for funding allocation, other financial contributions may be required from other sources to secure approval.
 - If the business case is not approved by the Environment Agency and no funding is secured the project will not progress, meaning a risk to the FCERM delivery and environmental programmes within the Harbour.
 - Risk of raising expectations – whilst the plan will help us manage, maintain and enhance Chichester Harbour’s coastline for wildlife and continue to deliver projects to manage our flood and erosion risk, there will need to be difficult discussions and tough decisions. The project is about bringing the stakeholders and community on a journey, to understand and acknowledge their risk, identify constraints and opportunities collaboratively, and embrace adaptation in the recognition that in reality not everywhere will or can be protected in the future.

10. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		x
<p>Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation</p> <p>The Plan’s objectives directly address climate change challenges and the environment front and centre. The Plan’s core objective is to ‘by 2030, help strengthen the resilience of the communities and environment of Chichester Harbour to flooding and coastal change for a range of future climate scenarios, using adaptive pathways to the year 2100 and beyond’.</p> <p>A key environmentally focused objective is to ‘by 2030, identify projects, actions and approaches for Chichester Harbour to help habitats and species recover and thrive, boost biodiversity, improve water quality, sequester carbon, preserve heritage, enhance natural landscapes and restore the ecosystems and the interconnections between them’.</p> <p>The Plan also recognises the need to transition and adapt management practices to become more resilient to climate change and to utilise nature to manage risks, through the objective, ‘by 2030 we will work with those who own land, businesses or assets around the harbour to help them understand</p>	x	

their responsibilities and support them to transition and adapt to become more resilient to flooding and coastal change in the future using a combination of sustainable practices and nature-based solutions’.		
Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing The Plan recognises the importance the Harbour plays to promote health and wellbeing, through amenity provision and access to nature. Therefore, an objective of the plan is to ‘by 2030, deliver a plan for Chichester Harbour that manages long term coastal access and amenity needs, connects people with nature and promotes wellbeing’.	X	

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Existing and proposed coastal management strategies and plans for Chichester Harbour.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Adoption of North Solent Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), Executive Board, 2 November 2010
- 12.2 North Solent Shoreline Management Plan [Shoreline Management Plan - Shoreline Management Plan \(northsolentsmp.co.uk\)](http://northsolentsmp.co.uk)
- 12.3 National FCERM Strategy for England (2020) [Environment Agency – National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 12.4 Natural England 2021 <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5535304204419072>