

REPORT TO KINCARDINE AND MEARN'S AREA COMMITTEE – 8 FEBRUARY 2022

COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUND 2021/22 – KINCARDINE AND MEARN'S AREA COMMITTEE ALLOCATION

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This report seeks the agreement of the Area Committee to disburse the sum of £89,558.75 Coastal Communities Funds allocated to the Kincardine and Mearns area for 2021/22.

1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 Consider the applications submitted and agree to the proposed funding allocations for projects which meet the criteria within coastal communities in Kincardine and Mearns:

- **Bervie Braes Path - £22,925.75**
- **Mearns Heritage Coastal Trail - £40,000.00**
- **Catterline Braes Feasibility Study - £25,000.00**

1.2.2 Agree in principle to allocate £50,000 from the 2022/23 Coastal Communities Area allocation to the Mearns Heritage Coastal Trail to allow the completion of the next phase of rock armour on the coastal path to prevent further erosion.

2 Decision Making Route

2.1 A further award of Crown Estate Scotland funding was received on 17 November 2021 for 2021/22. The total amount of £716,469.98 was received by Aberdeenshire Council which is significantly higher than previous allocations as it is based on a new distribution methodology. As per the framework for the use of the funds agreed by Infrastructure Services on 11 March 2021 (Item 12), half of the allocation is to be managed by the four coastal Areas of Aberdeenshire with each Area set to receive £89,558.75 for 2021/22. The award letter from the Scottish Government requested the funds were to be spent in 2021/22 i.e. by end of March 2022. Due to the extremely tight timescales to spend the funds a request was submitted for an extension to the deadline allowing funding to be carried forward until March 2023 this has now been granted.

3 Discussion

3.1 Councillors were previously consulted on the process for disbursing the Kincardine and Mearns allocation where it was agreed that communities should be invited to submit applications to the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee

where applications would be scrutinised and funds allocated to those most closely meeting the funding criteria.

- 3.2 Three applications have been received with a total value of £87,925.75. The project to upgrade the Bervie Braes path can be completed by the end of March 2022 whilst the Bervie Braes are closed to traffic thus avoiding any further road closures. The other two projects will be undertaken over the Summer months and completed before the Winter of 2022.
- 3.3 One of the benefits of being granted an annual allocation from the Scottish Government is the ability to plan ahead and support larger projects which can make a real difference in our communities. Due to the often short timescales given by the Scottish Government in awarding our funding, it is not always possible for groups to be able to undertake coastal projects over the winter months. Therefore, to allow MERCHAT to be able to undertake the completion of the coastal protection works by installing gabions along two sections of the Johnshaven coastline, the Committee are being requested to agree in principle to award a further £50,000 from the 2022/23 allocation thus allowing the group to plan ahead and seek all the necessary permissions so that they can be ready to undertake the works as soon as the grant from the Scottish Government is confirmed which will hopefully allow the project to start before the end of the summer period.
- 3.4 Details of the applications received are provided and the Area Committee is asked to consider the projects against the criteria (Appendix 2) and disbursement of the funds available: -

- **Bervie Braes Path, Stonehaven – total project cost £32,325.75**
The sign posted path leading from the harbour up onto Bervie Braes and onwards to Dunnottar Castle has been badly impacted by severe storms over recent years and is in urgent need of repair and upgrade with the addition of a handrail to assist walkers in tackling the steep hill. Council Officers have been working in partnership with Stonehaven Town Partnership(STP) to raise funding to undertake the works. The Roads Service has allocated £7,900 in their 2021/22 budget and STP were successful in securing £1,500 from Paths for All. An application was submitted to the Aberdeenshire Coastal Communities Challenge Fund 2021/22 but was unsuccessful due to the tight timescale for applications and the difficulty in obtaining sufficient quotes from contractors at the time. The Roads Service has since obtained 3 quotes and selected a preferred contractor to undertake the works. Thus leaving a balance of £22,925.75 still required to allow this project to proceed before the start of the busy tourist season. This path has been well used by both locals and visitors as a short route up to the War Memorial and Dunnottar Castle, however, only the very able are currently able to negotiate the current tricky ground conditions. The upgrade of this path will build on the work to replace the wooden boardwalk and installation of additional signage linking the coastal path from Cowie village along the seafront and up to Dunnottar Castle.

The work will involve cleaning the linear drain that runs the length of the footpath, installing a kee-clamp handrail along the full length of the footway,

lay a concrete path with a tamped finish in order to provide grip for footway users and install new stone steps at Castle Street at the end of the footpath. The work is hoped to be undertaken whilst the Bervie Braes are closed to traffic during the winter months with work aiming to be completed before it reopens on 28 March 2022.

- **Mearns Coastal Heritage Trail (MERCHAT) – Total project cost £40,000**
Tangleha Artists Collective Limited (TAC) was established in 2016 as a not-for-profit limited company to (amongst other objectives) carry out and promote environmental improvement and practical conservation; facilitate and support new community ventures; organise meetings, training courses, skill share workshops and events and promote natural building, self-sufficient living and permaculture.

The Mearns Coastal Heritage Trail (MERCHAT) group was established in 2018 under the auspices of Our Mearns Tourism Association (OMTA) but became affiliated to TAC in November 2019 as this Company was more closely aligned with MERCHAT's objectives. Their work is supported by a wide range of local residents, landowners, businesses, heritage organisations, Community Councils and Aberdeenshire Councillors. TAC, via its subgroup MERCHAT, is currently focusing its activities on restoring and maintaining the Mearns Coastal Heritage Trail between Johnshaven and St Cyrus as a valuable asset in tourism, heritage, environmental and local social capital terms. The trail is at risk of being lost via a combination of neglect, natural coastal erosion and storm damage. The plan is to upgrade the most at risk areas section by section as funding allows to safeguard and reconstruct key sections of the path and future proof the route by reducing the risk of further erosion damage. If this is not done now, the damage to the path will be irreparable. If successful, its positive economic, social, environmental and health outcomes will provide long term benefits for the whole community of the Mearns. It is hoped that eventually people can walk or even cycle safely from St Cyrus to Inverbervie, and eventually on to Stonehaven.

The next phase requiring urgent attention is to add a further row of rocks in front of the Seagreens cottages to protect the path from further storm damage. This will require 720 tons of rock armour being purchased and positioned by local contractors, to include areas further around Seagreens Bay towards the Lime Kilns path which was restored in 2019. MERCHAT have confirmed that should the funding be granted they will be able to complete the works by Autumn 2022.

The next stretch of path requiring urgent attention is the placing of gabions along the edge of the Narrows track which have rusted and have now burst open. TAC would like to reinforce this area by building up rock armour from the base of the gabions to protect this area. This will require 800 tons of rock armour to be purchased and positioned by local contractors. The few hundred metres of track going south from Johnshaven is heavily potholed and often flooded. They would also like to resurface this track with type 1, which will be purchased, laid and compacted by local contractors. The total project cost is circa £50,000 with confirmed quotes yet to be obtained.

To allow this additional piece of work to proceed it would be helpful for MERCHAT to have certainty of future funding to allow them to plan ahead and seek the necessary permissions. Therefore the Area Committee are being asked to agree in principle to allocate £50,000 of next year's Coastal Communities Area allocation to this project to allow the preparatory work to proceed so that works can proceed next summer. This would equate to approx. 50% of the total budget so would still allow funding to be made available for other coastal projects not yet identified.

- **Catterline Braes Action Group – total project cost £25,000**

The Catterline Braes Action Group (CBAG) was established in March 2015, with the objective of preserving the integrity of the Catterline Braes and raise funds to facilitate this. A number of projects have been completed to date, from implementing drainage solutions, planting trees to stabilising slopes by using ground anchors and geogrid mesh. These projects can be viewed at <https://www.cbag.org.uk/media/>.

There remain two major challenges which threaten the integrity of the Catterline Braes:

1. Landslides resulting from saturation of the soil on the braes, and
2. Landslides triggered by marine erosion (storm waves at high tide) at the base of the braes.

The local community, through CBAG, continue to address the first issue by installing and maintaining drainage and stabilisation solutions designed in collaboration with Glasgow Caledonian University and monitored by University of Aberdeen.

The second issue is more complex and beyond the capabilities of CBAG and the local community alone. Such works will require engineering studies, performed by recognised companies, who can fully assess the challenges and recommend solutions to support future funding applications to implement a suitable coastal erosion protection strategy.

Therefore, CBAG are seeking funds to engage a consultant to undertake a feasibility study to:

1. Perform modelling assessments to estimate the potential future beach erosion and cliff retreat as a result of rising sea-levels and wave action
2. Quantify the impact of this coastal erosion on the village of Catterline and its associated infrastructure (e.g. the access road to the harbour)
3. Recommend options which could be considered to address the issue.

Quotes are currently being obtained but an initial estimate has been sought with a value of circa £25,000 being a reasonable cost assumption for the works.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

4.1 This report helps deliver the following Strategic Priorities:

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities

4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed:

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	X		
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland		X	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	
Climate Change and Sustainability	IIA attached as Appendix 1		
Health and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 1		
Town Centre First		X	

4.3 There is a potential financial risk to the Council in allocating grants to external community organisations. This will be mitigated by working closely with the community groups to ensure their projects remain on track and can be delivered within the funding timescales.

4.4 There are no staffing implications arising from this report. The management of this budget will be undertaken within existing area management resources.

4.5 An integrated impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as Appendix 1 and there are positive impacts as follows:

- **Mental Health:** The improvements to the paths will allow more people to get out and about and enjoy walking which has been shown to have a positive impact on mental health.
- **Exercise & Physical Activity:** The improvements to the surface of both paths will make it more accessible to the majority of walkers. Unfortunately due to the steep nature of the Bervie Braes path it will not be accessible to wheelchair users but there is an alternative path along the road network. Similarly the improvements to the paths along the Johnshaven coastline will improve access but due to the nature of the coastline some sections of the path cannot be widened sufficient to provide wheelchair access. Both paths allow pedestrians to use a path away from traffic routes making it a more enjoyable experience.

- **Infrastructure Resilience:** All the projects aim to repair and upgrade current paths and improve coastal protection that have been impacted by severe weather in recent years. The projects will take into account the weather elements and ensure works are designed to be robust to deal with climate change.
- **Quality of Environment:** The repair work aims to improve the existing paths and access to our coastlines. This will have a positive impact in allowing more people to enjoy the outdoors and allow them to enjoy the natural environment.

4.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level [Corporate Risk Register 2021 \(aberdeenshire.gov.uk\)](#):

ACORP005 - Working with other organisations.

ACPOR006 – Reputation management (including social media).

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level [Plans and reports - Aberdeenshire Council](#):

ISR005 – Open spaces that encourage active, healthy lifestyles.

BSSR003 – We live within our means and use public money to maximise outcomes for our communities.

BSSR006 – Staff working close to the communities they serve, making decisions based on local need.

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section B.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance in order to determine any matter that is specific to its Area not otherwise properly delegated to any other Committee.

Alan Wood
Director of Environment & Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Diane Henderson, K&M Area Project Officer
6 January 2022

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 – Funding Criteria

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

Coastal Communities Funding Allocation 2021/22

Assessment ID	IIA-000345
Lead Author	Diane Henderson
Additional Authors	Lesley Robertson
Service Reviewers	Bruce Stewart
Subject Matter Experts	Susan Forbes, Claudia Cowie
Approved By	Bruce Stewart
Approved On	Tuesday February 01, 2022
Publication Date	Tuesday February 01, 2022

1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

Aberdeenshire Council receive an annual allocation of funding from the Crown Estate Scotland. Part of the allocation is awarded to the four coastal Areas of Aberdeenshire to be disbursed with approval from the Area Committee. Councillors were consulted on the process for disbursing the Kincardine and Mearns allocation where it was agreed that communities should be invited to submit applications to the Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee where applications could be scrutinised and funds allocated to those most closely meeting the funding criteria.

Applications were sought for disbursement of the 2021/22 allocation of £89,558.75. In total 3 applications were received which are considered to meet the criteria. These applications will go forward to the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee on 8 February 2022 for further scrutiny and consideration of allocating the funds.

During screening 3 of 10 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 2 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Health Inequalities
- Sustainability and Climate Change

In total there are 6 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 0 negative impacts, all impacts have been mitigated.

A detailed action plan with 0 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by bruce.stewart@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	No
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and/or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	No
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy reduce inequality of outcome?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	No

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Not Required
Climate Change and Sustainability	No Negative Impacts Identified
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	Not Required
Health Inequalities	No Negative Impacts Identified
Town Centre's First	Not Required

4. Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

4.1. Health Behaviours

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Healthy eating		Yes		
Exercise and physical activity	Yes			
Substance use – tobacco		Yes		
Substance use – alcohol		Yes		
Substance use – drugs		Yes		
Mental health	Yes			

4.2. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Exercise and physical activity	The improvements to the surface of both paths will make it more accessible to the majority of walkers. Unfortunately due to the steep nature of the Bervie Braes path it will not be accessible to wheelchair users but there is an alternative path along the road network. Similarly the improvements to the paths along the Johnshaven coastline will improve access but due to the nature of the coastline some sections of the path cannot be widened sufficient to provide wheelchair access. Both paths allow pedestrians to use a path away from traffic routes making it a more enjoyable experience.
Mental health	The improvements to the paths will allow more people to get out and about and enjoy walking which has been shown to have a positive impact on mental health.

4.3. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
------	--------	----------	-----------

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Committee report on Community Impact Assessment	A survey was undertaken in May to July 2021 into the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on our communities. A report was presented with findings to Aberdeenshire Council on 23 September 2021. The findings showed that people had suffered from anxiety, lack of exercise and had put on weight. The three most popular activities respondents indicated that they were doing to address these issues included walking (80%), exercising at home (28%) and cycling (19%).	With more people now working from home they are undertaking their exercise more locally and therefore demonstrates a need for better quality paths within our communities.
External Consultation	Stonehaven Participatory Budgeting Exercise	Comments submitted included requests for safer walking paths for family access in Stonehaven, improving connectivity around Stonehaven, improve the path from the harbour to Dunnottar Castle.	The project to improve the path leading from the harbour up onto Bervie Braes with the inclusion of a new handrail will address these suggestions/comments.
External Consultation	New LOIP Priority - Health & Wellbeing	This recognises that Mental Health & Wellbeing is an important contribution to our wellbeing in Aberdeenshire as we recover from the impact of COVID-19.	It promotes taking part in physical activity as a means to improve mental wellbeing and promote recovery.
Internal Data	Aberdeenshire Council Strategic Assessment 2020/21 - Draft	The Strategic Assessment provides an overview of health and wellbeing lifestyle factors including activity and mental health (see page 32). The document also makes reference to the Scottish Health Survey (page 114). Both documents site mental health and obesity as growing challenges and that poverty has an impact on people being able to access sports facilities.	Having good quality outdoor paths which people can access freely will contribute to improving healthy lifestyles.

4.4. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

Two of the projects will repair and upgrade current paths to make them more accessible to walkers. The third project aims to find solutions to prevent further coastal erosion to protect the coastline which is currently well used by both locals and visitors. All projects will provide improvements within their communities and for visitors to the area.

5. Sustainability and Climate Change Impact Assessment

5.1. Emissions and Resources

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Consumption of energy		Yes		
Energy efficiency		Yes		
Energy source		Yes		
Low carbon transition		Yes		
Consumption of physical resources		Yes		
Waste and circularity		Yes		
Circular economy transition		Yes		
Economic and social transition		Yes		

5.2. Biodiversity and Resilience

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Quality of environment	Yes			
Quantity of environment		Yes		
Wildlife and biodiversity		Yes		
Infrastructure resilience	Yes			
Council resilience		Yes		
Community resilience		Yes		
Adaptation		Yes		

5.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Infrastructure resilience	All the projects aim to repair and upgrade current paths and improve coastal protection that have been impacted by severe weather in recent years. The projects will take into account the weather elements and ensure works are designed to be robust to deal with climate change.
Quality of environment	The repair work aims to improve the existing paths and access to our coastlines. This will have a positive impact in allowing more people to enjoy the outdoors and allow them to enjoy the natural environment.

5.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
------	--------	----------	-----------

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Feasibility study	A feasibility study is to be undertaken by a consultant into the coastal erosion at Catterline. At this stage it would preemptive to comment on the findings and potential future recommendations.	It is unknown at this stage what works will be required to prevent further coastal erosion at Catterline.

5.5. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

Two of the projects aim to upgrade existing paths but taking into account the environment and weather elements to provide a long lasting solution. It is not possible to identify at this stage what the future plans will be from the Feasibility Study tackling the Catterline coastal erosion.



COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUNDING CRITERIA

The criteria is as follows:

1. **Site** of the project or the **community** is within **one mile** of Aberdeenshire's coastline.

Examples of settlements that could be eligible are Findon, Portlethen, Newtonhill, Muchalls, Stonehaven, Catterline, Kinneff, Inverbervie, Gourdon, Johnshaven and St Cyrus.

As **sites** are specifically included it is possible that applications will be received for projects taking place at coastal locations, outwith any settlement.

Such applications may come from groups or organisations representing communities of interest as well as of place (for example wildlife or environmental, arts or wellbeing groups).

2. **The funds must be able to be spent and claimed by 31 March 2023**, there will be no opportunity to extend this deadline. It is hoped that there will be future funds available so if your project is not sufficiently advanced to be able to submit a claim for this financial year then you may be able to apply in future years.

3. Projects must have a **tangible link to the coast and/or the sea**, for example:

- Projects that help people develop skills related to coastal or seafaring pursuits, activities or enterprises, for example sailing, fishing or boatbuilding.
- Projects that celebrate the heritage of coastal and seagoing communities of place and interest, for example, a coastal or fishing village or township, historic boatbuilding or relevant clubs or organisations.
- Projects that improve access to coastal areas, for example paths and viewpoints.
- Projects that improve the coastal environment, for example applications to establish and support community groups looking after their coastline.
- Projects that improve community-controlled infrastructure such as harbours, boathouses and buildings.
- Town centre public realm improvements will not be eligible unless they can be demonstrated to improve access to the foreshore, beach or harbour.

4. Project must contribute to at least one of Aberdeenshire Council's priorities:

Council Priority 1	Our People (Education and Health & Wellbeing)
Council Priority 2	Our Environment (Infrastructure and Resilient Communities)
Council Priority 3 -	Our Economy (Economy & Enterprise and Estate Modernisation)