

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Executive Director for Neighbourhoods and  
Environment

To

Cabinet

On

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(Neighbourhoods & Environment)

Agenda  
Item No.

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## Catchment to Coast Innovative Resilience Fund (IRF) Outline Business Case (OBC)

Place Scrutiny Committee  
Cabinet Member: Councillor Mulroney  
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

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### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To note the submission of the Catchment to Coast Outline Business Case (OBC) to DEFRA and thereby receive further grant funding to continue the project.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet note the bid awarded to the Catchment to Coast partnership by DEFRA on 25 October 2021 for £672k of grant funding.

2.2 That Cabinet note the submission of the OBC to DEFRA to seek a further £5.463 million of grant funding to the Catchment to Coast partnership over the following 5 financial years (April 2022 to March 2027).

### 3. Background

3.1 In the 2020 Budget the Government allocated £200 million to the Innovative Resilience Fund (IRF). The aim of the fund is to test and demonstrate practical innovative actions, using Natural Flood Management (NFM) techniques to adapt to a changing climate and improve the resilience of areas at risk of flooding.

This funding will provide a unique opportunity to deliver flood and coastal resilience measures in areas that would not normally be eligible for grant funding. Learning from the IRF projects will be used nationally to inform improved decisions regarding the future distribution and allocation of flood defence grant funding.

- 3.2** A collaborative bid in the form of an Expression of Interest (EOI) was submitted to the EA in January 2021 by the Catchment to Coast Partnership. The project was granted approval by DEFRA in May 2021 and forms one of only 25 pilots nationwide to receive capital funding to take forward the actions and interventions for the communities identified within the EOI.

Southend Borough Council (SBC) is the Lead Partner in terms project governance and reporting to Defra. SBC and Thurrock Borough Council (TBC) are jointly responsible for the delivery of the project.

Ten other organisations, listed below, make up the collaborative Catchment to Coast Partnership, each bringing their own expertise, experience and resource to partnership delivery:

- Anglian Water
- Castle Point Borough Council
- Environment Agency
- Rochford District Council
- Kings College London,
- The University of Essex
- AmbioTEK CIC
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Mott MacDonald
- Thames 21

- 3.3** The Catchment to Coast Project is innovative in its approach to flood and coastal resilience as all proposed innovative NFM solutions will be complementary and designed to work in coherence across the hydraulic catchment, regardless of administrative boundaries.

Furthermore, both peak flood and peak drought will be considered in terms of rainwater harvesting, flood attenuation and community re-use. All innovative NFM solutions will compliment natural processes either as a hybrid solution or replacement of traditional hard engineering measures.

The resilience actions proposed will provide secondary benefits including improved water quality, pollution reduction, increased biodiversity, carbon capture, social value in terms of financial benefit and non-financial benefits such as hydro-citizenship, community collaboration, education and skills/training.

- 3.4** The Catchment to Coast project is strategically aligned with all existing Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management plans at local, regional and national levels.

- 3.5** Based on the innovation focus and goal of reducing flood risk and coastal erosion whilst gaining wider benefits, six specific objectives have now been set for the Catchment to Coast project to align with those of the national IRF goals, they are:

1. **Improved Flood Resilience:** Increase the resilience of communities, agricultural land and infrastructure to flood and coastal erosion risks within the project area.
2. **Creating Awareness and Education:** Provide opportunities for education and increased awareness and responsibilities within the communities.

3. **Pollution Reduction:** Achieve improvements to water quality and reduce diffuse pollution through intervention.
4. **Wider Benefits:** Provide and demonstrate the value of wider benefits from innovative flood risk and coastal erosion risk reduction measures.
5. **Data Capture, Monitoring, Reporting and Learning:** Provide increased knowledge and data regarding innovative solutions.
6. **Influence Future Policy Making:** Influence local policy, including planning to drive improved decision making around flood risk and coastal erosion reduction.

Further details on sub-objectives, how they will be measured and by when, can be found within the OBC document.

#### 4.0 Development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) Submission

The EA requires an OBC to be submitted by the end of March 2022. This OBC is not a standard Environment Agency OBC in that it is not a traditional investment OBC, the decision to invest has already been agreed by DEFRA.

Instead, owing to the compressed project timeframe, this OBC unusually combines the development and delivery of the project in one case and also allows for further project refinement in year 2 of the project programme, i.e. after the OBC has been submitted.

By refinement, it is meant that, any surveys and investigations which have yet to be completed in year 1 of the IRF project may continue into year 2 with results being analysed and then used to refine solutions and measures detailed within the submitted OBC.

The flexibility allowed with the IRF OBC means that the document can be expanded to cover any questions the EA have, e.g., any areas of uncertainty or risk in terms of effectiveness and locality of measures. These can therefore be refined and consulted upon in year 2. However, the fundamentals of the project, i.e., the scope, including objectives and benefits will not change.

**4.1** Submission of the OBC allows the receipt of further DEFRA funding to facilitate project progression, thus securing the funding required for the delivery and implementation of the finalised, agreed measures. The OBC will include the following information:

- **Programme** – high level project delivery over the next five years.
- **Strategic Case:** Outlines the key strategic policies that the project aligns with, as listed in earlier sections.
- **Economic Case:** Description of the current baseline, costs of the proposed interventions and benefits they will achieve. This includes how will risk be incorporated, how damages be assessed and qualitative and quantitative benefits.
- **Management Case:** Description of how the project will be managed, including governance, MoU between partners, engagement plans, and lessons learned.

- **Commercial Case:** The project will make use of current frameworks where possible and utilise alternate sustainable processes and contracts to procure local contractors where specialised services cannot be obtained through normal processes.
- **Financial Case:** Details on how much the project and intervention measures will cost including optimism bias and risk analysis.

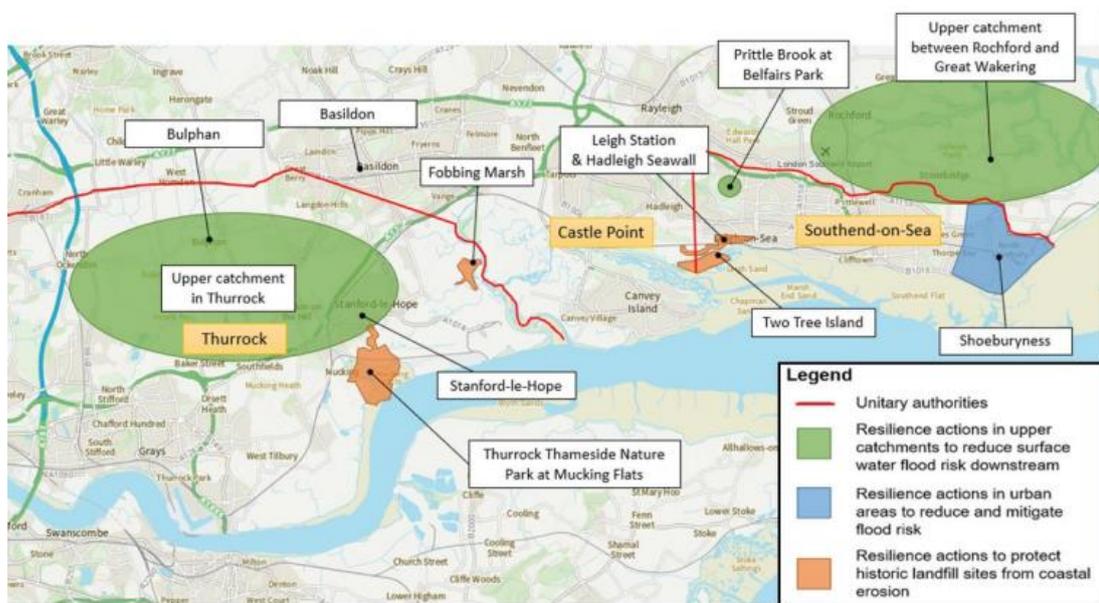
## 4.2

Within Southend the following options are being considered as part of the Catchment to Coast project. Refinement of options and exact locations will be confirmed following further investigations and survey results in year 2 as described above.

- Surface water flood risk reduction in Shoebury and Prittle Brook catchments - using nature-based solutions such as leaky dams and regenerative agriculture in the upper catchment areas, with the retrofitting of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including the implementation of water storage and community re-use measures, in the middle and lower catchment.
- Surface water flood warning beacons - in high surface water flood risk areas of the Shoebury and Prittle Brook catchments.
- Coastal erosion risk reduction measures on Two Tree Island - including implementation of bio-tiles and off-shore bio-barriers to reduce the impact of waves. The use of coir rolls and dredged material will be utilised where feasible to further stabilise and encourage the generation of new saltmarsh.

Outside the Southend Borough, other areas with comparable risks, the following options and locations are proposed:

- Surface water flood risk reduction in Stanford Le Hope catchment, Wharf Road, Tank Hill and the Balstonia Park areas - using nature-based solutions such as leaky dams wetland habitats and regenerative agriculture in the upper catchment areas, with the retrofitting of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including the implementation of water storage and community re-use measures, in the middle and lower catchment.
- Surface water flood warning beacons - in high surface water flood risk areas of the Bulphan catchment.
- Coastal erosion risk reduction measures on Coalhouse Fort, Fobbing Marshes, Tilbury, Tilbury Marshes and Castle, The Warren, Canvey Hights Country Park and Benfleet Creek the Hadleigh Seawall - including implementation of bio-tiles and off-shore bio-barriers to reduce the impact of waves. The use of coir rolls and dredged material will be utilised where feasible to further stabilise and encourage the generation of new saltmarsh.



The Catchment to Coast project takes a *strategic* approach across the whole catchment

As the Catchment to Coast project focuses on whole hydraulic catchments the project study areas are not limited to political boundaries. As such Essex County Council is closely involved and supportive of the project and the proposals. A formal letter of support has been received.

## 5 Reasons for Recommendations

The Catchment to Coast project provides a unique, grant funded opportunity to make Southend a national exemplar in flood and coastal erosion risk management using innovative flood risk and coastal erosion measures. All learning from this project will be shared and used to inform future local and national projects.

Increasing flood and coastal erosion resilience through the measures delivered by the Catchment to Coast project will not only improve the resilience of Southend and neighbouring communities but will also seek to empower and support communities socially with the setting up of tools and processes that promote wider education and skills development within both local communities and schools.

The Catchment to Coast project also provides an opportunity for wider betterment to be implemented through the use of innovative NFM including regenerative agriculture, such as increasing biodiversity, carbon sequestration and reduce pollution impacts.

## 6 Corporate Implications

There are no negative implications, the Catchment to Coast is project which can deliver multiple outcomes in terms of the Council Southend 2050 ambitions

- Pride and Joy
- Safe and Well
- Active and Involved
- Opportunity and Prosperity
- Connected and Smart
- Future Ways of Working

## **7 Financial Implications**

The six-year project is wholly grant funded, via DEFRA.

## **8 Environmental Impact**

There are multiple positive environmental impacts of the project including increased biodiversity, pollution reduction, and carbon sequestration.

## **9 Legal Implications**

No legal implications have been identified

## **10 People Implications**

No negative people implications have been identified at this time, As detailed above, the project will provide significant benefits to residents and businesses within Southend through the reduction of flood risk and costal erosion and additionally offer much in terms of social benefit.

## **11 Property Implications**

There are no property implications.

## **12 Consultation**

As part of the Catchment to Coast project extensive engagement will be undertaken with local councillors, project partners, local communities, residents, landowners, businesses and all other stakeholders. This will be commenced once the OBC is submitted. A Communication and Engagment Task Group has already been set up and a stakeholder mapping exercise is already underway. A dedicated engagement and learning officer position will be advised in due course to solely manage this important aspect of the project.

## **13 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

No Equality and Diversity Issues have been identified to date. Additional thorough assessments will be undertaken at all appropriate future project stages.

## **14 Risk Assessment**

Appropriate assessments will be carried once the detailed option identification and optimisation stages progresses further.

## **15 Value for Money**

The Catchment to Coast project will provide a very high level of value for money due to the significant amount of grant funding the project will receive from DEFRA.

## **16 Community Safety Implications**

No community safety implications have been identified at this time.

## **17 Background Papers**

There are no background papers.

## **18 Appendices**

1. IRF OBC Summary Document