

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 11 th October 2022
Report Subject	Flintshire Coastal Park
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Economy and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014 a strategic framework of opportunities along the Dee Estuary foreshore was produced. The proposal of a coast park sought to identify the estuary foreshore as a single entity akin to a Regional Park.

The concept of a Flintshire Coast Park has been re-explored through the commissioning of a scoping study which reviews case studies and precedents before analysing the benefits and constraints. The study suggests potential coast park footprints and steps for implementation.

A Flintshire Coast Park for Flintshire would provide a fresh impetus and focus for the coast, raising the profile of the foreshore and enable communities and businesses to work sustainably and innovatively to help deliver environmental, economic and social prosperity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members note the content of the scoping study and agree that the Flintshire Coast Park is taken forward as a local, informal entity.
2	Members agree that option two would be the preferred coast park footprint to take forward.
3	Members support the Access & Natural Environment Manager to establish a Flintshire Coast Park Steering Group to move forward on the next steps for implementation.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FLINTSHIRE COAST PARK
1.01	<p>Following the completion of the Wales Access Improvement Programme (2006-2013), culminating in the opening of the Wales Coast Path in 2012, Flintshire identified a series of local ventures along the Dee Coastline from Talacre to Shotton that individually and collectively would help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance and interpret the area's outstanding natural and heritage value• Attract and retain more visitors• Provide community facilities and events• Create jobs and enhance skills• Reverse environmental decline
1.02	<p>In 2014 Flintshire commissioned the development of a strategic framework of opportunities along the Dee Estuary foreshore and produced a Flintshire Coast Park Prospectus. The proposal of a coast park sought to identify the estuary foreshore as a single entity akin to a Regional Park.</p>
1.03	<p>The Flintshire Coast Park review was put forward and considered at:</p> <p>Cabinet - 6th January 2022, where it was agreed to re-examine the idea of a Coast Park through the commissioning of a scoping study.</p> <p>Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 8th February 2022, where members supported the approach to commission a scoping study and recommended that the six hubs along the estuary (proposed in the 2014 prospectus), be reviewed.</p>
1.04	<p>In March 2022, a Scoping Study was commissioned (the Study, Appendix 1) to examine the potential for the formal establishment of a Flintshire Coast Park.</p>
1.05	<p>The Study discusses whether a formal Regional Park designation should be pursued, or whether the existing informal Coast Park brand should be more deeply embedded in local policy and priorities.</p>
1.06	<p>The Study also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reviews Regional Park precedents in the UK, describing their journey from inception to designation;• reviews progress of projects listed in the 2014 Flintshire Coast Park prospectus;• examines legislation and planning policy hooks for a Regional Park;• consults with locally based stakeholders;• maps options for potential footprints of a Regional Park / Coast Park;• considers challenges faced by the Flintshire Coast and how some of those could be addressed through a Coast Park.

1.07	<p>The study explores four potential footprints of a Flintshire Coast Park:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option one has a coastal focus based on the 2015 Flintshire Coast Park prospectus, but with two additional gateways at Llannerch-y-môr and Saltney; • Option two would have the same coastal focus as option one, but with additional connection green infrastructure (GI) corridors from neighbouring communities; • Option three ‘Dee Viewshed’ would include all the elements of the previous options and would extend into the hinterland, where views from higher ground include the Dee Estuary; • Option four would include all the previous option elements and would have an extended footprint to include the remaining areas of the Lower Dee catchment in Wales. <p>The study does not recommend any particular option as all have a range of potential benefit and dis-benefits, however on balance, it is felt that option two provides the most suitable footprint for maximum benefit.</p>
1.08	<p>The Study concludes with next steps in relation to either a formal Regional Park designation or embedding the more informal Coast Park status.</p>
1.09	<p>Lessons from the formal designation route show that, with a statutory remit and robust governance structures, momentum and longevity can be established with possibilities for influencing policy and potentially more opportunity for investment, business involvement and revenue generation. There is, however, currently no legislation available to accommodate a regional park designation in Wales.</p>
1.10	<p>Precedents using the more local, non-standard designation approach have been able to achieve some of the aspects of designated regional parks, however with their more informal structures and procedures they appear to be more vulnerable to changes in partnership arrangements, policy and time-limited funding streams.</p>
1.11	<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional stage - this would involve: the establishing of a project team; articulating a vision; identifying costs and funding; developing a spatial plan and defining a detailed boundary; and setting up a body to provide a steer for the Flintshire Coast Park. This includes a short narrative on compliance with the Habitat Regulations Assessment. • Implementation stage - this would involve: engagement with key stakeholders, development of individual projects and construction contracts; setting up of administrative and monitoring systems. • Management stage - this would involve: development and sustaining of business, recreation, tourism and heritage initiatives.
1.12	<p>Timescales</p> <p>There is significant work to undertake in the transitional stage and it is expected that it can be undertaken through 2023/24, with an expected Coast Park launch in spring 2024.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Currently work along the coast is funded through external grant aid and delivered in house through the Coastal Rangers.
2.02	The financial implications of a Flintshire Coast Park are currently unknown but would be identified through the implementation phase as set out in the scoping study. Investment would be required either through external funding or from the capital programme.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT														
3.01	<p>The Flintshire Coast Park is expected to deliver positive impact benefits and a full integrated impact assessment will be completed as part of the transitional stage work.</p> <p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive: A Flintshire Coast Park will bring partners and communities together to deliver a vision for the Dee Estuary foreshore which will involve working together for its long-term prosperity.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>No Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> <td>Positive – The Flintshire Coast Park will provide the opportunity for access, health and environmental objectives to be integrated within other policies and plans both within the authority and by partner organisations.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> <td>Positive - The Flintshire Coast Park would seek to collaborate with partners to work towards the delivery of the Coast Park Plan.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> <td>Members, partners and stakeholders will be brought together through the Flintshire Coast Park Steering Group.</td> </tr> </table> <p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td> <td>Positive: The coast makes an important contribution to the local economy with reports concluding that the Wales Coast Path contributes £16 million to Wales' economy annually. The vision for the Flintshire Coast Park has the opportunity to capitalise on this potential within Flintshire.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> <td>Positive: The coast will face many challenges over the next decades,</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Positive: A Flintshire Coast Park will bring partners and communities together to deliver a vision for the Dee Estuary foreshore which will involve working together for its long-term prosperity.	Prevention	No Change	Integration	Positive – The Flintshire Coast Park will provide the opportunity for access, health and environmental objectives to be integrated within other policies and plans both within the authority and by partner organisations.	Collaboration	Positive - The Flintshire Coast Park would seek to collaborate with partners to work towards the delivery of the Coast Park Plan.	Involvement	Members, partners and stakeholders will be brought together through the Flintshire Coast Park Steering Group.	Prosperous Wales	Positive: The coast makes an important contribution to the local economy with reports concluding that the Wales Coast Path contributes £16 million to Wales' economy annually. The vision for the Flintshire Coast Park has the opportunity to capitalise on this potential within Flintshire.	Resilient Wales	Positive: The coast will face many challenges over the next decades,
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	including climate change and potentially coastal erosion. Having a Coast Park provides the means for these issues to be highlighted and discussed.
Healthier Wales	Positive: A significant number of people already use the Wales Coast Path for access and recreation which has a positive impact on their health and wellbeing, keeping them fit and active. The stakeholder group would look at opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing opportunities in the area of the coastal park..
More equal Wales	Positive: Discussions within the stakeholder group will include equalities and how the coast can deliver across the board whilst also maintaining community safety.
Cohesive Wales	Positive: The Flintshire coast Park will bring different partners together enabling more cohesive planning and delivery of work along the coast.
Vibrant Wales	No change
Globally responsible Wales	Positive: Having opportunities for outdoor recreation on your doorstep reduces the need for travel making a positive contribution in minimising carbon emissions.

Flintshire Council’s Well-being Objectives

Ambitious Council

The Flintshire Coast Park will have a positive impact, supporting economic growth through enhancing the local environment quality for local and regional business along the Dee Estuary foreshore

Achieving Council

The Flintshire Coast Park will have a positive impact, providing high quality, accessible, coastal environment and joining up with public and third sector partners to support quality of life in communities and for individuals and families

Caring Council

The Flintshire Coast Park will have a positive impact, making communities safe places by working with partners to prevent crime, repeat crime and anti-social behaviour

Green Council

The Flintshire Coast Park will have a positive impact, enhancing the natural environment and promoting access to open and green space

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation with partners and key stakeholders was carried out as part of the study but as the implementation stage progresses, engagement with stakeholder will be crucial

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Flintshire Coast Park Scoping Study.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Tom Woodall, Access & Natural Environment Manager Telephone: 01352 703902 E-mail: tom.woodall@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Wales Coast Path – National walking route covering 870miles of the Welsh Coast.</p> <p>Regional Park – An area of land preserved on account of its natural beauty, historic interest, recreational use or other reason, and under the administration of a form of local government.</p> <p>Green Infrastructure – Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities.</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales – Natural Resources Wales is the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body, formed in April 2013, largely taking over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales.</p>