

## ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Tuesday, 8 <sup>th</sup> February, 2022
<b>Report Subject</b>	Flintshire Coast Park
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Countryside
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### 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 should be explored again in light of opportunities related to Levelling Up funding (LUF) availability.

Work to develop a Regional 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 strategic direction set out in the Coast Park Prospectus and support work to develop the creation of a Regional Flintshire Coast Park.
2	That Cabinet welcomes the views of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and delegates authority to the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development) to make minor changes to the proposals to reflect those views.

## 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"><li>• Enhance and interpret the area's outstanding natural and heritage value</li><li>• Attract and retain more visitors</li><li>• Provide community facilities and events</li><li>• Create jobs and enhance skills</li><li>• Reverse environmental decline</li></ul>
1.02	<p>TEP consultancy was commissioned in 2014 to develop a strategic framework of opportunities along the Dee Estuary foreshore and produced a Flintshire Coast Park Prospectus. (Appendix 1). 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>Regional Parks have a formal designation to enable the coordination and management of publicly accessible land at a landscape scale. They often include landscapes of regional importance and provide havens for wildlife.</p> <p>In North Wales, on a landscape scale, there is the National Park and the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, (and a proposal for a new National Park in NE Wales). A Regional Park would fill the position between these large area designations and the more local Country Park designation.</p>
1.04	<p>Regional Parks can bring partners together to enable and deliver significant local and regional economic and environmental benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Help safeguard and create jobs by supporting local businesses and inward investment</li><li>- Provide accessible high quality greenspace for improved health and well being</li><li>- Develop improved community resilience and local economic opportunities making spaces more liveable places</li><li>- Support climate change adaptation by maximising the role of green infrastructure</li><li>- Improve biodiversity and habitat connectivity</li><li>- Changes perceptions.</li></ul>
1.05	<p>There are few examples across the UK but notable ones are:</p> <p>South Wales - The Valleys Regional Park, <a href="https://valleysregionalpark.wales/">https://valleysregionalpark.wales/</a></p> <p>Colne Valley Regional Park near London, <a href="https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/">https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/</a></p>

1.06	<p>The concept of a Flintshire Coast Park should be explored again in light of opportunities related to Levelling Up funding (LUF) availability.</p> <p>The LUF guidance states:</p> <p><i>‘Investment in cultural assets can rejuvenate places, leading to positive economic and social outcomes at a local level. It can help to retain and grow a highly skilled workforce, attract tourists to bolster local business, and provide opportunities to grow people and communities’ connections with places. Additionally, supporting the development of a more positive relationship between people and place can have a positive impact on both mental and physical health. In short, culture and heritage are things that people up and down the country bring people together and strengthen communities.’</i></p> <p><i>LUF Prospectus March 2021</i></p>
1.07	<p>The idea of a Flintshire Coast Park, with a possible designation of Regional Park, will align with the LUF and currently the two applications for LUF funding in Flintshire are focused in the coastal zone and would be supported by the Flintshire Coast Park Prospectus.</p>
1.08	<p><b>The Coast Park Prospectus</b></p> <p>The aims of the prospectus were underpinned by the detailed proposals presented in the 2008 Flintshire Coastal Park Green Infrastructure Action Plan and the Lower River Dee Green Infrastructure Action Plan.</p>
1.09	<p>The vision presented was for an accessible coast park which celebrates the natural environment and heritage of the Welsh coast. The vision can be achieved through sustained investment and by working with key partners including community, businesses and public bodies who share the vision for the coast park.</p> <p>By 2034 the Flintshire Coast Park could have a reputation for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its high quality and accessible environment;</li> <li>• Vibrant and sustainable fishing operations;</li> <li>• Thriving tourism and recreation opportunities at the Northern Gateway, Connah’s Quay, Flint, Bagillt, Greenfield and Talacre;</li> <li>• Flourishing wildlife enjoyed by locals and visitors;</li> <li>• Celebrating its heritage; and linking communities.</li> </ul>
1.10	<p>The priorities presented were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing our tourist, recreational and cultural activity;</li> <li>• Improving gateways to the coast at Connah’s Quay, Flint, Bagillt, Greenfield and Talacre;</li> <li>• Increasing usage by pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders along the Wales Coast Path;</li> <li>• Stimulating interest in the coast’s natural history and maritime culture.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revitalising ports and harbours to increase interaction between the land and water;</li> <li>• Ensure effective marketing and branding.</li> </ul>
1.11	<p>Six key hubs offer particular opportunity to promote heritage, recreation, tourism, wildlife and enterprise. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Gateway</li> <li>• Connah's Quay Dock</li> <li>• Flint Waterfront</li> <li>• Bagillt Inlet &amp; Bettisfield Hill</li> <li>• Greenfield Dock &amp; Greenfield Valley</li> <li>• Talacre</li> </ul> <p>The Wales Coast Path provides the common thread between the 6 hubs, providing walkers, and visitors, with a flavour of the Flintshire Coast. The distinctive character of each hub will give users a rich and memorable experience of this part of coastal Wales</p>
1.12	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>A new Regional 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.</p>
1.13	<p>The 2014 prospectus outlined 20 year strategic direction for the coast in Flintshire and much work has been achieved in the last 7 years. A review of action delivered, and an understanding of what opportunities remain, would inform the next stage of the process.</p>
1.14	<p>A scoping study to look at the formal establishment of a Regional Park is planned to be undertaken, to include mapping, SWAT analysis, delivery plan, branding &amp; marketing etc. This would need to be followed up by consultation of various stakeholders such as Natural Resources Wales, Town &amp; Community Councils along the estuary and other key partners and community group stakeholders. The identification of funding is paramount to realise the potential.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
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 Regional Flintshire Coast Park are currently unknown but would be identified through the scoping study.
2.03	There is limited capacity to undertake the scoping study in-house, and therefore it should be commissioned externally and likely to cost in the region of £25k.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	Consultation with partners and key stakeholders would be carried out as part of the development work.
3.02	The concept of a Regional park was explored at Planning, Environment 7 Economy Programme Board in November 2021 and broadly supported.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	None identified.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Flintshire Coast Park Prospectus.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS AND CONTACT OFFICER</b>
6.01	None.  <b>Contact Officer:</b> Tom Woodall, Access & Natural Environment Manager <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 703902 <b>E-mail:</b> tom.woodall@flintshire.gov.uk

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Wales Coast Path</b> – National walking route covering 870miles of the Welsh Coast.</p> <p><b>Levelling Up Fund</b> – The government’s levelling-up fund is designed to combat regional inequality by investing in infrastructure that brings pride to a local area.</p> <p><b>Green Infrastructure</b> – 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><b>Natural Resources Wales</b> – 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>