

Barrow Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Coastal Protection Function – Briefing Note 14/10/22

Background

Barrow Borough Council is a “coast protection authority” and a “coastal erosion risk management authority” under the terms of the Coastal Protection Act 1949.

This status gives the Council powers, subject to certain conditions, to carry out coastal protection work for the protection of land within the Borough or for the purposes of management of coastal erosion risk. Under certain circumstances it is possible to acquire land compulsorily to carry out such works. It should be emphasised that these are permissive powers only, not duties.

It is also a requirement that coastal protection works carried out by other parties is notified to the Council.

To enable the Council to have the clearest picture of how to use powers under the act we need to have an understanding of coastal processes and to adopt a strategic approach to coastal management. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) commissioned Shoreline Management Plans to be developed for the coastline. These set out shoreline management policies over short (0-20 years), medium (20-50 years) and long timescales (up to 100 years). These policies are used by the Environment Agency (EA) to guide approval of coastal management schemes and allocation of grant in aid funding to authorities. They are not statutory documents, but authorities are expected to refer to them when making coastal management decisions and determining planning permissions.

Consultancy Support

The management of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) is in practice carried out through a contract with WSP (previously Capita RE&I, who were recently acquired by WSP). Capita/WSP have fulfilled this contract for many years and have a good local knowledge of the coast around the Borough.

The contract requires WSP to carry out the following:

1. Implement the Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) action plan and report on progress to the Environment Agency.
2. Identify areas of flood and coastal erosion risk, assess those risks and make recommendations for their management and, subject to funding, implement the agreed management policies.
3. Produce a 5-year rolling programme of works and studies to sufficient detail for inclusion in the Environment Agency medium term plan.
4. Deliver the Walney Island Flood and Coastal Erosion Strategy Review subject to the availability of funding. This is now part of the Cumbria Strategy.
5. Carry out annual survey of Coastal Assets in Schedule 1 in accordance with the Environment Agency (EA) Condition Assessment Manual (CAM: EA document 166_03_SD01) and produce a report detailing the condition of each asset and recommendations for action. Notify private defence owners of the need for remedial work on their structures. This will include preparing, administration and project management of the annual maintenance programme.
6. Represent the client as the lead contact and participant at the North West England and North Wales Coastal Group and sub groups.
7. Procure, collate and analyse the data collection for local aspects of the Cell 11 Regional Monitoring Strategy.

8. Maintain the SANDS database, updating data as necessary and providing data outputs to the Coastal Group.
9. Keep up to date with all current best practice in Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management.
10. Act as the clients lead representative to liaise with other bodies including but not exclusively being; Environment Agency, Natural England, RSPB, CWT this will also include the public, Council officers and elected members.
11. Utilise and provide updates to the EA National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping data.
12. Regularly monitor risk areas on the coastline such as West Shore Park and Walney landfill sites after significant storms with frequencies dictated by local weather.
13. Provide responses to planning consultations relating to flood and coastal erosion risks.

Any specific schemes to undertake additional studies or design, procurement and supervision of coastal works are outside of the contract with WSP and would be procured as separate projects.

Strategy

The Council has adopted the Cumbria Coastal Strategy. This breaks down the coast into discrete geographical areas, or “units”. For each unit, a strategic option is selected, based on the level of risk that exists, normally from one of the following:

1. No Active Intervention
2. Do minimum.
3. Hold the line.
4. Managed realignment.

The Cumbria Coastal Strategy was adopted in 2020, and incorporated an earlier strategy for Walney that was adopted in 2014. The basic strategy for each unit on Walney is shown below.

Benefit Area (Unit)	Details
1 – North Walney (North of West Shore Park to Lenny Hill)	No Active Intervention
2 – West Shore Park	Managed Realignment - Extend the temporary ‘ad hoc’ rock armour along the whole frontage and maintain in the short term while assets are relocated. In the longer term allow natural processes to occur.
3 – Earnse Point to Walk Hall Scar	Maintain existing defences, subject to funding
4 Walk Hall Scar to Nanny Point Scar	No Active Intervention
5 – Nanny Point Scar to Hillock Whins and Biggar to Tummer Hill	Do Minimum - Create rock stockpile. Repair defences as and when failures occur.
6 – Hillock Whins to Hare Hill	Do Minimum - Create rock stockpile. Repair defences as and when failures occur.
7 – South Walney	No Active Intervention

Benefit Area (Unit)	Details
8 – Vickerstown to North Scale	Maintain and repair defences to implement the SMP policy of Hold The Line

Current Projects

There is currently no programme for major works in Barrow. However, there is a potential pipeline of projects as follows:

- Grant in aid for improvements to defences at Roa Island and flood protection to the causeway.
- Innovation Resilience funding through Environment Agency through the ECO-CoBS programme (Ecological Community Owned Coastal Buffer Strips). A project group has been established and the accountable body is Wyre Borough Council. An engagement officer has been appointed through Morecambe Bay Partnership. This will look at management of the salt marsh at Roa Island/Foulney Island and the management of the temporary defence at West Shore Park. The programme is being rebranded as Our Future Coast and is due to launch in January 2023.
- A study of erosion and flood risks at Askam.

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