

Cabinet– 1 October 2025

Readoption (2025) of the Christchurch Bay & Harbour Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report is to consider the readoption of the Christchurch Bay & Harbour Strategy, following amendments that were required as a result of the Environment Agency assurance process in May 2025. These amendments focused on affordability and investment planning, along with some revisions to the adaption pathways for the management units within the NFDC area.</p> <p>This report only covers the areas of change that have been incorporated, while the full Strategy report from September 2024 can be viewed under the background papers.</p> <p>The changes were considered to be sufficient enough to warrant the Strategy being taken through the Council adoption process again.</p>
Recommendation(s)	<p>i. That Cabinet recommend that Full Council approve and adopt the revised Strategy, with the recommended leading options identified in the Christchurch Bay & Harbour Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for the New Forest District Council area, subject to securing the necessary funding contributions.</p> <p>ii. In approving and adopting the revised Strategy, that NFDC commits to developing a Funding Strategy that will seek to identify and aim to secure the necessary funding contributions to enable the national or local leading options to be implemented via future capital schemes and maintenance of existing/new schemes, noting that the exact amount of contributions will need to be confirmed as schemes are developed.</p>

	<p>iii. Cabinet notes that there is no statutory duty upon NFDC as the Coast Protection Authority to undertake coast protection works, nor does the adoption of the Strategy bind NFDC to commit to the provision of any funding for the delivery of the identified options.</p> <p>iv. Cabinet notes that throughout the development of the Strategy, extensive engagement and consultation was undertaken with:</p> <p>1. Residents & wider communities (including landowners, community groups, organisations and individuals)</p> <p>2. Key stakeholders,</p> <p>3. Officers & members</p>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>Approval and Adoption of this FCERM Strategy by New Forest District Council, BCP Council, and the Environment Agency, ensures that technically feasible, environmentally acceptable and economically viable options are developed to reduce the risks from coastal flooding and erosion to people, their properties and the environment over the next 100 years for the coastline from Hengistbury Head to Hurst Spit.</p> <p>Without such an approach, it is likely that current management approaches would continue in the short term, meaning future coastal defence works would be managed on an 'ad-hoc' or reactive basis which would lead to poor cost efficiency and a general increase in the coastal flood and erosion risk over time. Furthermore, without an adopted strategy access to Grant in Aid funding (GiA) is likely to be significantly reduced.</p> <p>The adoption of the Strategy supports the Place Priority no.2 within the Corporate Plan for better "Protecting our climate, coast and natural world".</p>
Ward(s)	Barton & Becton Ward and Milford & Hordle Ward
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Geoff Blunden –Environment & Sustainability

Strategic Director(s)	James Carpenter – Place, Operations and Sustainability
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Introduction and background

1. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP), New Forest District Council (NFDC), and the Environment Agency (EA) collaborated on work to develop a new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for Christchurch Bay and Harbour (hereafter referred to as The Strategy) between 2021 and 2025. There was extensive engagement with local communities and statutory stakeholders alike to identify and recommend an adaptive approach to how the risks of coastal flooding, erosion and landsliding in this area can be managed sustainably over the next 100 years in a changing climate.

2. The Strategy identifies where, when and what type of works are needed to manage the risks of coastal flooding and erosion over the next century and what they may cost.

As Coast Protection Authorities, BCP and NFDC do not have any statutory duty to undertake coast protection work but can use permissive powers to protect the coastline and work with communities to help them adapt to future coastal change.

3. The original Strategy was adopted by NFDC on 16th September 2024, with BCP Council adopting on 15th October 2024 and the EA LPRG providing final assurance on 19th May 2025.
4. During the assurance process undertaken by Environment Agency Large Project Review Group (LPRG) in Winter 2024, a number of clarifications were sought by LPRG with regard to affordability, along with a query regarding the precise starting point of the preferred options for some of the option development units.

The points raised by LPRG are summarised as follows:

- The affordability of the Strategy was challenged due to the lack of an affordability statement (creating uncertainty).
- There was a variation in outcomes starting from 2026.
- Framework allows changes but lacks clarity on dates and triggers.
- Re-evaluation may cause delays and increase costs.

- Delays could expose communities to higher risks due to asset degradation.
5. Further work was subsequently undertaken by the Strategy Project Team to address these points and add clarity to the Strategic Appraisal Report (StAR) resulting in some limited revisions.

Additionally, an Affordability Assessment was developed as an additional piece of work to determine which options are realistically deliverable in the short term.

The Affordability Assessment considered potential funding sources (e.g., FCERM-GiA, Local Levy, CIL, council budgets, private contributions, see Financial and resource implications section)
 6. It was deemed appropriate by the NFDC delivery team that as this additional work resulted in changes to an approved report, that the Strategy should be taken through the adoption process again, to align with transparency requirements and ensure full awareness by the Council, residents and communities.
 7. This report covers only the areas of change that have been incorporated into the Strategy to seek EA assurance. A link to the original adoption report is included and background papers and should be referred to for further detail.

THE RECOMMENDED PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR NFDC

8. The Affordability Assessment concluded that there was there was low affordability in Epoch-1 (0-20 yr) for the leading options* for the following Option Development Units (ODU's)
 - Naish Cliff & Barton-on-Sea (ODU 14) within SMZ 14
 - Rook Cliff (ODU 17) & Milford on Sea (ODU 18) within SMZ 16

*The leading options have been identified as where and when potential defence schemes can be implemented along the frontage.

This meant that it was not feasible to start with the original option (typically the local aspirational option or national option). As such, it was concluded that the national / back up options may need to be initially delivered. This is likely to be a less substantial interim measure until funding for more expensive options can be found.

9. To reflect the change to lower cost options, a new 'starting point' has also been identified in the adaptive pathway. This is considered to be more realistic and thus serves to better manages public expectations.
10. Within the NFDC area, revisions have been made to the starting point of the identified options as follows:

- ODU 14 (Naish Cliff & Barton-on-Sea) – reduced scheme (capital refurbishment only)
- ODU 17 (Rook Cliff) – Defence upgrading works to commence later
- ODU 18 (Milford-on-Sea) - Defence upgrading works to commence later

The following table provides more information on the changes to the original 2024 adopted report:

ODU	Adopted 2024 (Original)				Proposed 2025 Revision / New starting point				Position Shift
	Option Shown	Works	Upgraded works commencing	Leading Option	Option Shown	Works	Upgrade works commencing	Leading Option	
ODU 14 Barton on Sea	Managed Realignment A	Upgrade rock toe defences and lengthen the revetment to cover Marine Drive West. Install new cliff drainage at Marine Drive and Marine Drive West.	Epoch-1	NATIONAL	Maintain	Capital refurbishment of existing defences	-	BACKUP	Reduced scheme: No upgrade. Capital refurbishment only for Epoch 2 & 3.
ODU 17 Rook Cliff	Improve A	Upgrade rock defences and construct groynes to help retain beach material.	Epoch-1	LOCAL	Improve C	Capital refurbishment of existing defences	Epoch-2	NATIONAL	Start works later, around mid-epoch 2: (Upgrade rock defences and construct groynes to help retain beach material).
ODU 18 Milford on Sea	Improve A	Beach nourishment scheme, upgrade seawall and upgrade / replace groynes. (Construct setback tidal defences adjacent to Sturt Pond and PLR in Epoch 2).	Epoch-1	NATIONAL	Improve B	Capital refurbishment of existing defences	Epoch-2	BACKUP NATIONAL	Start works later, around mid-epoch 2: (Beach nourishment scheme, upgrade seawall and upgrade / replace groynes. Construct setback tidal defences adjacent to Sturt Pond and PLR).

11. The Strategy's recommended leading options identify where and when potential defence schemes can be implemented along the frontage but identifies a significant funding challenge in order to deliver the national and/or local options.

Corporate plan priorities

12. The Strategy supports the "Place Priorities" identified within the Corporate Plan, particularly priority 2 – "Protecting our climate, coast and natural world."
13. Priority 2 specifically refers to working with partners to deliver FCERM strategies, which will set actions for protecting our coastline. This Strategy identifies risk, mitigation actions and funding requirements for better protecting our coastline, communities and the environment.

Options appraisal

14. See section 8 to 10 above that outline the updated options approach.

Consultation undertaken

15. Stakeholder engagement and consultation have been key to the Strategy's development. Since July 2021, four phases of engagement with key stakeholders, residents, and the wider community (including landowners, community groups, organisations and individuals) had sought to understand their aspirations and concerns, and to help shape the Strategy as it developed. The fifth phase of stakeholder communication was a formal 3-month public consultation on the draft leading options to manage the risk of coastal flooding and erosion and which closed in August 2023.
16. Following re-adoption by NFDC, a final sixth round of communications will be undertaken to inform stakeholders about the final approved Strategy, explain what it means, and what the next steps are to begin to implement the Strategy in the areas identified as being those needing to be prioritised due to the immediacy of risk and/or condition of existing defences. The final round is now planned for commencement in November 2025 to allow time for NFDC to first consider Strategy readoption.
17. A briefing note / has been added to the NFDC website under Plans and projects for coastal management (see background papers), that outlines the revisions that have been made.

Financial and resource implications

18. The revisions to the Strategy report have included the addition / expansion of an affordability assessment to consider potential funding sources.
19. Potential funding sources that have been highlighted and may be considered for inclusion within the investment Strategy, include:
 - FCERM maintenance budget contributions Capital reserves / loans
 - Council maintenance budgets
 - Capital reserves / loans
 - Community Infrastructure Levy
 - Local Enterprise Partnerships
 - Local Levy
 - Asset Income
 - Business rates
 - Council Tax
 - Lottery Funding
20. The current central government partnership funding rules means that the recommended leading strategic options do not qualify for full central government FCERM grant in aid (GiA) funding and will, therefore, need contributions from alternative sources to be delivered.
21. The current partnership funding mechanism encourages those benefiting from schemes to contribute to their cost to supplement government grants. By working together, schemes which are still viable but have less economic benefits would still be able to unlock national funding to boost and prioritise schemes to implement the Strategy. Raising sufficient funding will:
 - Allow development and delivery of the recommended coastal defence schemes.
 - Increase the standard of protection of defences.
 - Improve the quality of materials used (e.g. to better fit the character of a location)
 - Increase certainty and accelerate the delivery of schemes.
 - Deliver wider benefits to communities associated with schemes, such as improved landscaping, access and public realm.
 - Deliver environmental enhancements to increase biodiversity.
22. The current funding rules identify the scale of the funding contributions required over the next 100 years in cash terms across the NFDC area ranges from £88m - £99m, depending on which combination of recommended strategic options (national, local or backup) are eventually taken forward.

23. With the new starting point, under current funding rules, over the next 20 years, the contributions required in cash terms are now estimated to be in the order of £13m (see partnership funding required column for selected schemes, in the table below).

This is a reduction from the original value stated where contributions were estimated to be between £39m-£50m. Whilst the scale of schemes are slightly reduced or started later (i.e. discounted) this represents a reduction of between £26m-£37m.

24. The balance of contributions required reflect the need for ongoing revenue expenditure by the asset owners (NFDC) to undertake maintenance works to ensure estimated defence life is provided to reach the anticipated replacement capital investment timing indicated above, as well as implementing property level protection in some ODUs for which other non-GiA funding sources may be available.
25. It should be noted that the level of funding contributions required are indicative and may change (up or down) as more work is undertaken to develop schemes and refinement of required works, costs, etc are developed; as such these values act as a guide to the likely level of contributions that will need to be secured in the coming years to enable FCERM investments to occur in line with the leading options identified in this Strategy.
26. If these funding contributions are not achieved, then the Strategy in some areas identifies a back-up option that will provide a minimum amount of intervention to manage risks for a period of time, but that will eventually cease and the do-nothing scenario will become more likely, leading eventually to the scale of damages and loss described above.
27. In some cases, any intervention – even if funding can be secured – is unlikely to mitigate the long-term risks posed by climate change in terms of increasing risk of coastal flooding, erosion, and land sliding. Therefore, the measures set-out in this Strategy need to be considered as buying time and reflected in wider local planning policy with a view to the potential need for land-use adaptation longer-term (up to and beyond the 100-year horizon adopted in developing this Strategy).
28. The following tables illustrate the estimated timing of funding contributions now required over Epoch-1 the 100-year period in order to deliver the Strategy in the NFDC area as a whole, along with requirements for each Option Development Unit. The preferred starting options are highlighted. This table reflects the position following the changes since original adoption, as highlighted above.

Leading Option	Option Overview (Epoch 1)	Epoch 1 Costs (£K)	Indicative GiA (£K & % amount)	Partnership Funding Required (£K)
Naish Cliff and Barton – on - Sea				
ODU 14 - National	Improve toe defences, cliff stabilization & drainage	27,165	3,215 (12%)	23,680
ODU 14 – Backup B	Maintenance works only in epoch 1	1,020	N/A	1,020
ODU 14 – Backup D	Maintenance works only in epoch 1	1,020	N/A	N/A
ODU 14 – Backup Maintain	Maintenance with some refurb	6,126	N/A	N/A
Cliff Road				
ODU 16 - National	Maintenance works only in epoch 1	392	N/A	N/A
ODU 16 – Local	Beach recharge & rock structure construction	5,032	1,301 (26%)	3,731
ODU 16 - Backup	Maintain existing defences and undertake beach recycling (reliant on recharge in other units). In the long term this is likely to lead to more erosion than the Managed Realignment options.	785	N/A	N/A
Rook Cliff				
ODU 17 - National	Refurbishment of existing defences	3,986	N/A	3,986
ODU 17 – Local	Improve defences	13,825	2,400 (17%)	11,425
ODU 17 - Backup	Maintain toe defences	3,985	N/A	3,985
Milford – on- Sea				
ODU 18 - National	Seawall repairs, control structures & small-scale recharge	11,964	1,355 (11%)	10,609
ODU 18 – Backup B	Refurb existing defences & beach recharge. Major works in epoch 2	5,301	N/A	5,301
ODU 18 - Maintain	Ongoing beach management, refurb of defences & beach recharge	6,752	N/A	6,752

*Indicative funding for major capital scheme in option (if multiple capital schemes, not all have been assessed).

**Local option funding does not include GiA for ODUs 14 and 18 even though some could be available. This is because the BCR for the local option in these ODUs is <1, and it is uncertain if it will be viable to proceed with these if funding contributions are not forthcoming.

Legal implications

29. The works required to implement the Strategy recommended leading options are undertaken under permissive powers granted to BCP and NFDC under the Coast Protection Act 1949 and Land Drainage Act 1991, and the Environment Agency under the Water Resources Act 1991. However, there is no statutory legal duty on these authorities to undertake these schemes if there is no justification and/or insufficient funding to do so.

Risk assessment

30. No formal risk assessment is required for the adoption of this Strategy.
31. As detailed within the recommendations the adoption of the Strategy does not commit NFDC to the provision of any funding to support the preferred delivery option.
32. Key risks have been identified with regard to flood and erosion risk to assets within the Strategy area that will occur with non – delivery of the options for each ODU.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

33. The proposed changes to the Strategy do not have any further impact to the environmental / climate and nature implications identified in the original report.

Equalities implications

34. The proposed changes to the Strategy do not have any impact on the Equality Impact Assessment completed 25th April 2024.

Crime and disorder implications

35. None identified.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

36. None identified.

Conclusion

37. The Strategy's recommended leading options identify where and when potential defence schemes can be implemented along the frontage but identifies a significant funding challenge in order to deliver the national and/or local options.

38. The changes identified in this readoption paper improve the short-term funding challenges as the new options require less partnership funding contributions for Epoch-1.
39. Whilst the potential funding sources shown in section 21 should be considered, by doing so this does not in any way commit NFDC, and that any use of council funds has to consider wider organisational priorities and statutory duties.
40. In some cases, any intervention – even if funding can be secured – is unlikely to mitigate the long-term risks posed by climate change in terms of increasing risk of coastal flooding, erosion and landsliding. Therefore, the measures set-out in this Strategy need to be considered as buying time and reflected in wider-Local Planning policy with a view to the potential need for land-use adaptation longer-term (up to and beyond the 100-year horizon adopted in developing this Strategy).

Appendices

Appendix A – Christchurch Bay
Harbour FCERM Strategy

Background Papers:

Original report:
Original Strategy report –
Cabinet, 4 September 2024

Link to Strategy website:
[Christchurch Bay and Harbour
FCERM Strategy 2021-2024 -
Poole & Christchurch Bays Flood
and Coastal Erosion Risk
Management \(twobays.net\)](#)

Link to NFDC Plans and projects
for coastal management
webpage:
[Plans and projects for coastal
management - New Forest
District Council](#)