

ANGUS COUNCIL**PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE****6 JUNE 1996****SUBJECT: SCOTLAND'S COASTS****REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Abstract: The main points of the Scottish Office Discussion Paper "Scotland's Coasts" and the options for the future are outlined. Whilst this report welcomes the recognition of the benefits of coastal zone management and the complexity of coastal issues it calls for further consideration of the commitment required if a local coastal forum is to be established and become effective.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:-

- a) the Committee note the main points of the "Scotland's Coast" discussion paper as outlined in this report;
- b) this report be submitted to the Scottish Office as Angus Council's response to the "Scotland's Coasts" discussion paper and that the attention of the Scottish Office be drawn in particular to the fact that the Angus coast is a microcosm of nearly all aspects of the Scottish coast and thus should be given special consideration in terms of national funding including measures necessary to address coastal erosion;
- c) the report be referred to the following Committees for their interest - Roads, Recreation and Cultural Services and Environmental and Consumer Protection.
- d) further consideration be given to the merits of and resources required for establishing a local coastal forum which would of necessity encompass numerous other agencies both within and beyond the Angus Council area.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scottish Office, in March 1996, published a discussion paper entitled "Scotland's Coasts", several copies of which have been placed in the Members' Lounge, The Cross, Forfar.
- 2.2 The publication forms part of the Government's response to the report of the House of Commons Environment Committee on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning. The document itself has three main sections, the first deals with "The Coastline - Heritage and Resource; the second with "Coastal Management - The Present Framework" and the third with "Coastal Planning and Management - Future Options".

3 THE COASTLINE - HERITAGE AND RESOURCE

- 3.1 This section outlines the large variety of habitat and landscape types found around Scotland's coast and describes some of the major types and their locations. It also notes the high value of Scotland's natural heritage and notes their national, European and global significance. Mention is made of the Tay estuary as being one of the largest estuary systems in Scotland and of its importance as a food source for both native and migrating bird species.
- 3.2 This section of the report also covers the development planning process and notes that of the 4000 km (approx.) of mainland coastline, 12% is developed. This development tends to be concentrated in the urban estuaries and be of long standing. The coast as an economic and social resource is also covered in terms of the importance of coastline fisheries, fish and shellfish farming and the small scale activities of cockle and seaweed harvesting. Industrial development is mentioned with particular reference to ship building, ship repair, oil and gas development and aggregate extraction. The power stations and defence establishments also impact on the coastal areas and whilst the latter provides some degree of protection to wildlife in that day to day activity is low, they are not without problems.
- 3.3 Disposal of waste is another major heading under the heritage and resource chapter. All discharges to controlled waters require consent and as of 1 April 1996, this will be from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). There are some 1,000 authorised discharges to coastal and estuarine waters around Scotland, 80% of which were local authority discharges and the remainder industrial discharges of trade effluent. These all vary in size from small coastal communities to large industrial or chemical processes. Glaxochem Ltd in Montrose is given as an example of a large discharger for which conditions will apply for a wide range of quantitative restrictions on various substances which may be discharged in order to protect the aquatic environment. Other matters covered under disposal of waste material include spillages associated with the oil and gas industry at sea and on the coast; litter on the coastline, 80% of which has been attributed to discharges from ships at sea, and coastal landfill such as the Riverside site in Dundee.
- 3.4 The coastal waters and seas provide a useful transport medium with 90% of the UK international trade being carried by sea. Scotland's ports however vary from major commercial operations in the Firths and the East Coast to communication links with offshore communities. Harbour authorities can have a key role in coastal management "since their powers - especially to control activity in the water - are more extensive than those of other local authorities".
- 3.5 The recreational, tourist and cultural heritage aspects of the coast are also discussed. Dunes are recognised as areas where recreation and tourism can cause erosion due to visitor pressure. Coastal links golf courses are considered a marked feature of the Scottish rural environment. The Angus coast is recognised as having a concentration of such courses which brings economic benefit to the area. The cultural heritage, in the form of archaeological sites and the built heritage of harbours, lighthouses, boat building yards etc and the coastal settlements are recognised for their potential to be developed for economic advantage.

- 3.6 The dynamic environment of the coast is recognised and those areas suffering erosion are mainly where the coast comprises machair or links land. Land reclamation on the other hand has provided 'new' land for a variety of purposes with the airfield at Dundee being sighted as one example.

4 COASTAL MANAGEMENT - THE PRESENT FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 This section of the paper summarises the control mechanisms that apply to the coast and reviews some of the more recent initiatives to improve and co-ordinate coastal management for specific areas.
- 4.2 The planning system is quoted as "the major means for regulating development on-shore and as far as the low watermark". National policies and advice on coastal matters are given in Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs), Circulars and Planning Advice Notes (PANs) and these are reflected at the strategic level in Structure Plans and at detailed level in Local Plans. The situation with regard to Angus is discussed later in paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 and Appendix I to this report indicates the various policies and proposals, from the Written Statement of the Finalised Tayside Structure Plan 1993 of direct relevance to the coastal area.
- 4.3 NPPG7 specifically relates to planning and flooding and gives guidance in regard to tidal flooding and coastal processes both of which are issues to be addressed along the Angus coast.
- 4.4 Nature conservation is protected by various designations with the Angus coast having Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and a possible Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Buddon Ness and a Special Protection Area (SPA) and RAMSAR site at Montrose Basin. The built environment of the coastal communities is protected through conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings.
- 4.5 Other agencies such as the National Trust for Scotland, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Scottish Wildlife Trust also have a role to play in managing coastal sites they either own, lease or run under agreements.
- 4.6 The measures to protect fish stocks by controlling fishing activities in order to encourage the sustainable exploitation of the stock are outlined as are those surrounding intensive fish farming. Controls on industrial development are covered as are the various international, European and UK controls on pollution.
- 4.7 The recent management initiatives concerning the coast which the paper reviews use different types of statutory instruments and voluntary agreements etc. Those highlighted include:-
- the Framework Plans for individual lochs by Highland Regional Council to cover marine fish farming;
 - the Scottish Voluntary Marine Nature Reserve at St. Abbs in Borders Region which has a Joint Management Committee comprising Harbour Trusts, interest groups, community councils, and the Scottish Wildlife Trust which help the owners, the National Trust for Scotland, to manage the reserve;

- the Scottish National Heritage focus on Firths initiative which aims to establish management strategies for the Moray, Forth and Solway Firths by 1998 and other Firths later. This is being achieved through a partnership approach, or "Firth Forum". A wide range of sectoral interests and responsibilities are covered and it is hoped integrated such that the objectives of all parties are accommodated in the process of management strategy development. The projects also hope to find "new ways to include more local inhabitants in decision-making" and trial "practical contributions to the care of the environment".

5 COASTAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT - FUTURE OPTIONS

- 5.1 The chapter covers an analysis of the pressures and controls affecting the coastal area under similar headings as those used earlier in the document. These include concern that SSSI designation extends only as far as the low water mark, whereas ecological coastal units might extend much further seaward; the demand for coastal super quarries; litter on beaches; the need for environmentally sympathetic engineering solutions or managed retreat policies when dealing with coastal erosion and; the conflict between different recreational interests and/or commercial activities.
- 5.2 A section of this chapter discusses the two main types of proposals made in the past to resolve the conflicting pressures and management of the coast. The first being an extension of planning control but this is discounted on a number of grounds. These include: the view that 'local interest' cannot apply to offshore operations; that an extensive sectoral approach is already taken to control development below the low water mark and can be changed over time.
- 5.3 The second proposal concerns statutory or formal coastal zone management. This is based on the view that "the various elements of the coast have tended to be dealt with separately in policy development so that the shoreline, inter-tidal area and in-shore area are treated as distinct areas, with different measures and mechanisms applying in each. Nature conservationists, in particular, take the view that it should be treated as a single ecological zone. Therefore as the coast is subject to a variety of uses these interests should be brought together and a coastal zone management plan, developed to ensure resources are used in a sustainable way. However the view is expressed in the paper that "the evidence does not suggest that there are sufficient pressures which act across the whole of the Scottish resource that would justify a national statutory system" of coastal management. Neither would such a system follow the Government's commitment "to devolving decision-making to the local level....."
- 5.4 The main conclusions drawn in the paper are:-
- "the coast is a complex system which should be managed in an integrated way and the most appropriate management unit is the whole coastal zone - both foreshore and inshore waters";

- "current pressures, however, suggest that large scale or radical changes, such as the imposition of an integrated management regime for all coastal areas are not justified";
 - "pressures on the coast, where they occur, tend to be localised"; and
 - "there are successful examples of integrated coastal management for local areas.... which could be developed more widely, based on the themes of partnership and local accountability".
- 5.5 The discussion paper puts forward three options for change. Firstly, the encouragement of ,more local coastal fora, based on the Focus of Firths Initiative model with potential areas emerging through local interest. A local forum it is suggested could gather information on the state of the coast, investigate issues of local concern, develop local action to tackle problems and agree an integrated management strategy for the coastal area.
- 5.6 The second option is the establishment of a Coastal Forum for Scotland to provide a national context for coastal issues, and potentially encourage the formation of local coastal fora, encourage debate and better co-ordination of national frameworks and policies, assess the need for further advice and guidance, and disseminate information on good practice.
- 5.7 As a final option is is suggested that "further national guidance and advice might be published on key issues".

6 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 As mentioned earlier only 12% of the Scottish coast is developed and it is possibly for this reason that much of the document is nature conservation orientated. The coast within the Angus area on the other hand is used for a large variety of activities whilst also having a number of designations. The Angus coastal strip accommodates the majority of the major settlements of Angus. These comprise Arbroath, Montrose, Carnoustie and Monifieth plus a series of smaller settlements which between them account for 50% of the Angus population. The coast also accommodates the large Ministry of Defence site at Barry Links, golf courses, agriculture, recreational and tourist facilities, fishing and trading harbours, an oil supply base and a major chemical plant. It also accommodates major transport arteries for road, rail and shipping links with other areas. In terms of designations, there are a number of SSSIs, a RAMSAR site, a proposed SAC (Special Area of Conservation) and a proposed SPA (Special Protection Area), several Scheduled Ancient Monuments while a large part of the coast, between Arbroath and Montrose, is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value.
- 6.2 The Angus coast line is one of the few areas around Scotland where there is a threat from flooding and coastal erosion. This reflects the dynamic nature of the coast and the necessity to have regard to these problems when establishing land use policies. There is a need to preserve public safety, protect essential services and defend properties where deemed appropriate. The dilemma arises when trying to find solutions to these problems which are technically, economically and environmentally

- sound and sustainable. In certain instances this may include the option of managed retreat.
- 6.3 This mix of uses in what is a relatively small stretch of the Scottish coast and the various conditions prevailing along the coast marks the Angus coastline as being different to that in many other local authority areas; particularly when compared with either the more heavily industrialised and urbanised areas such as the Firth of Forth area or the remote coastline of north and west Scotland. One aspect that Angus would have in common with other local authorities is that coastal issues transcend administration boundaries.
- 6.4 In terms of the activities of Angus Council the coastal area also comes within the scope of the Council's Rural Strategy and within the geographic area of the Angus Rural Partnership for which a bid is being submitted to the Scottish Office. The coastal area will also form an integral part of the Angus Wide Local Plan which is currently being drawn together by the Planning, Transport and Economic Development Department. Other aspects of work occurring along the coastal zone include a feasibility project for a coastal walk/cycleway which is the subject of a Millenium Bid.
- 6.5 The need for an integrated approach to coastal management has already been recognised within the Angus area. The Tayside Structure Plan Consultative Draft of 1993 pointed out that pressure from the competing demands for development and conservation along the coastal corridor is likely to continue and may intensify. The draft therefore included a proposal to "liaise with other relevant bodies involved in matters affecting the coast of Tayside in preparing a coastal zone management plan". However the Scottish Office Environment Department did not favour such a comprehensive approach and suggested that the proposal should be "to prepare management proposals and policies for the coast" and this was subsequently incorporated within the finalised Structure Plan (see Appendix 1 for further details). The proposal in the Discussion Paper - "Scotland's Coast" also takes this less formal approach. It suggests that more local coastal fora should be encouraged and that these groups might undertake an integrated management strategy for the coastal area. It should be recognised however that any Tay Firth initiative would extend well beyond the Angus Council geographic boundary.
- 6.6 The Firths Initiatives progressed so far have had considerable input from Scottish Natural Heritage. In terms of the Firth of Forth for example an officer was seconded full-time to develop the project. It is unlikely in the current financial climate that similar support would be forthcoming for any Tay Firth Initiative. Such an initiative would involve a large number of organisations, including industrial concerns and at least three Local Authorities, and the potential for joint funding of a post of Project Officer may therefore exist.
- 6.7 Given the diversity of issues a coastal forum would cover a number of departments of Angus Council would need to have an input; namely the Roads, Recreation Services, Environmental and Consumer Protection in addition to the Planning, Transport and Economic Development Department. Clearly such involvement would represent a considerable commitment for the Council in terms of staff resources with

the potential for further demands in the form of projects. However, all the departments are already involved in coastal projects.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Directors of Law and Administration, Finance, Roads, Recreation Services and Environmental and Consumer Protection have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 The recognition within the discussion paper of the complexity of issues along the coastal corridor and the benefits to be gained from integrated management are to be welcomed. What also needs to be recognised however is the commitment which will be required in terms of time and resources if a local coastal forum is to be established and become effective. There is a need therefore for this issue to be the subject of further consideration.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/PC/IAL
27 May 1996

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APPENDIX 1 TO REPORT NO. 403/96

POLICIES, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINALISED TAYSIDE STRUCTURE PLAN WHICH RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE COAST

Employment Land

Proposal 1

The reservation of major industrial sites at Barry Buddon and Kinnaber and the safeguarded areas associated with them be deleted.

Environment

Proposal 2

To liaise with other relevant bodies involved in matters affecting the coast of Tayside in seeking to prepare management proposals and policies for the coast dealing with:-

- 1 development on the coast
- 2 protection of wildlife habitat
- 3 recreation and tourism
- 4 coastal protection and flooding risk
- 5 control of pollution
- 6 landscape and cultural heritage

Proposal 3

To liaise with other relevant bodies in the assessment of flooding risk for new development and in the evaluation of alternatives for flood defence and prevention, with full regard to their environmental impact.

Recommendation 1

In identifying land for development within Local Plans, due regard is taken of possible areas at risk from flooding and such areas are not allocated for development unless no suitable alternatives exist and it is conclusively demonstrated that development can be fully protected.

Policy 6

Development in areas liable to flood or where remedial measures would adversely affect the flood risk elsewhere will not normally be permitted.

Policy 7

Developments affecting areas classified or proposed for classification under international directives (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, or Ramsar Sites) will only be permitted where it can be conclusively demonstrated that either -

- 1 The proposed development will have no damaging impact on the habitats or species being safeguarded; or
- 2 There is a proven and overriding public interest in allowing development to take place which cannot be met in other less ecologically damaging locations or by reasonable alternative means.

Policy 8

Developments affecting National Nature Reserves and other confirmed or proposed Sites of Special Scientific Interest will only be permitted where it can be adequately demonstrated that either -

- 1 the proposed development will not compromise the underlying objectives and overall integrity of the designated area; or
- 2 there is a proven public interest where social, economic or safety considerations outweighs the ecological interest of the site and the need for the development cannot be met in other less ecologically damaging locations or by reasonable alternative means.

Policy 11

Development affecting confirmed or proposed Sites of Special Scientific Interest designated primarily for their geological interest will only be permitted where it can be adequately demonstrated that either -

- 1 The proposed development will not compromise the underlying objectives and overall integrity of the designated area; or
- 2 There is a proven public interest where social or economic considerations outweigh the geological interest of the site and the need for the development cannot be met in less geologically damaging locations or by reasonable alternative means.

Policy 22

Wastewater Treatment Plants in Tayside will be improved to meet the standards set by the River Purification Boards and wastewater treatment facilities will be constructed in coastal locations to meet the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Directive.

Transport and Communications

Policy 2

To maintain and develop those harbours within Local Authority ownership and, in appropriate circumstances, encourage the development of other harbour facilities within Tayside including:-

- 1 Co-operating in any joint studies for the development of the Region's ports with the Dundee Port Authority and the Montrose Port Authority.

Infrastructure and Energy

Policy 1

Priority for water services investment will be given to:-

- 4 the development of wastewater treatment plants in Dundee, Carnoustie, Arbroath and Montrose.

Tourism, Recreation and Sport

Strategic Priorities

The Development Strategy seeks to promote tourism and recreation as important elements of both urban and rural development. It gives priority to ensuring the sustainability of tourism in relation to opportunities and constraints arising from the Region's outstanding and diverse natural, built and cultural resources. The strategic priorities are -

- to encourage tourist development in Angus, particularly in the rural area and coast;
- to maximise the economic benefits from the Tayside's Championship golf courses;

