

Benone Strand Beach Access Infrastructure	13th November 2018
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Promote our tourism offer locally and internationally Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing and Cohesive Community
Outcome	Improved access to our natural environment. Development of visitor economy and health and well- being opportunities.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism & Recreation
Cost: (If applicable)	N/A

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to proceed to and complete on Stage 1 of the Council's Capital Investment process for beach access infrastructure works at Benone Strand. (Feasibility study, site investigation and project specification)

Background

The Council owned watersports facility, known as The Ark, at Benone Strand has quality facilities that allow members of the public to benefit from water-based and beach activities. The facility has showers, toilets, storage facilities, a viewing platform and a coffee shop and since its opening in 2015 has been well received by the public.

There are however some issues in relation to safe access from the facility running parallel to the access road leading to the beach. Technically, pedestrians and those using mobility aids have to utilise the main carriageway, with a speed limit of 60mph, to access the beach and the Ark, including any movements between the two. Roadside parking bays at this location further compound the safety issue.

As NI's first inclusive beach, Benone Strand and The Ark facility have made strong efforts to provide a facility that welcomes all regardless of mobility. We aim to have a safe, segregated, purpose-built access way linking The Ark building with the beach. Council is currently working on the provision of a storage facility for accessible beach equipment and other watersport related equipment. (This has already been already approved by Elected Members and funded by the Rural Development Programme under Co-operation projects).

Project Proposal

It is proposed that Council take the opportunity to enhance public access to Benone Strand from the new storage facility and The Ark by:

1. Construction of a permanent traffic-free pedestrian access route (promenade-type footpath), linking the Ark building with Benone Beach;
2. Provision of realigned disabled parking bays;

3. Provision of timber retention walls for retaining the sand dunes adjacent to the proposed access route;
4. Programme marram grass replanting.

Funding

Initial discussions have been held with Sport NI with a view to establishing if the project proposal is eligible for funding from Everybody Active 2020. Anticipated costs have been estimated between £60,000 and £80,000 and the initial indications are that the costs are eligible for the Sport NI Everybody Active 2020 programme.

Recommendation

The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to approve the advancement of the Benone Strand Beach Access Infrastructure Improvements project to Stage 1 of the Council's Capital Investment process.