

Title of Report:	Reinstatement of Ladder Access At Portnahapple, Portstewart
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15th December 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and enhancing our natural environment
Outcome	Our natural assets will be carefully managed
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation supported by Head of Estates

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£21,000 + annual maintenance costs.
Included in Current Year Estimates	No
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present on possible interventions to make safe access to the Portnahapple sea bathing facility in Portstewart. Elected Members are asked to consider the proposal and decide on whether or not to make an investment decision to refurbish.

2.0 Background

Portnahapple inlet, adjacent to the cliff path in Portstewart, has been a popular bathing location since the mid-20th century. Access and egress to the water was from the cliff path via concrete steps and a path leading to ladders and diving boards (Photo A – Annex A). Over the years these were constantly attacked and severely damaged by coastal storms. Eventually this infrastructure was removed due to concerns over safety and ongoing remedial costs. Since its removal a number of people over the years have commented on the loss of facility for cold water bathers and the diving fraternity. The site is still used informally by the public despite the removal of the infrastructure.

3.0 Proposal

The Tourism and Recreation's Coast and Countryside team have liaised with Council's Estates team and looked at necessary investment at the site. To provide safe access/egress it is necessary to replace the 'missing' concrete path which will lead to a ladder at the water's edge (Photos B-D Annex A). It is not intended to replace the diving boards. Given the potential for storm damage the ladder and rail have been designed to be removed during the winter months (Nov – Feb inclusive) to reduce ongoing maintenance costs. In effect this will be a seasonal facility. The rail will be identical to the current stainless steel handrail used along the cliff path.

Consultations with the Planning Office and DAERA have confirmed that replacing this infrastructure does not require planning approval or a marine licence. The terms of the lease with Crown Estates will not prevent these repair works. .

The initial capital cost for this work will be in the region of £21,000 based on indicative costs for the removable stainless steel ladder and safety rail, reinforced concrete path and labour. The proposal is not currently on Council's Capital works program.

The proposed ladder, to be situated at the water's edge, is approximately 30m from the cliff path. The reinstatement of this facility will clearly be seen as a provision of access to the water for use by the public. By doing so the Council could therefore be liable for potential claims arising from, for example slips, trips or falls. Discussions with Council insurers has therefore dictated the need for a suitable pedestrian surface with handrail to connect the cliff path to the ladder to ensure safety of those crossing the rocks. The rock surface is slippery much of the year due to algae and seaweed growth.

4.0 Maintenance Implications

The facility will require regular inspection and cleaning to remove algae which will cost approximately £750 per year. Given the history of this and similar facilities, Council will need to allow for annual maintenance repair costs. These repair costs are difficult to quantify and will be dictated by any storm damage. Council should be prepared for costs ranging from £2K to £3K for ladder/handrail repairs up to the full cost of replacement in any given year.

5.0 Recommendation

The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to consider the proposal for limited refurbishment of Portnahapple to allow safer access to the water. Subject to approval, an investment decision up to a maximum of £21,000 is required plus annual maintenance costs.

Annex A

Photo A – Previous layout



Photo B – New path location from existing steps onto rocks



Photo C - Direction of new path from existing steps



Photo D– Approximate location of new ladder

