



Title of Report:	Coast and Countryside Infrastructure Projects
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 February 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting & enhancing our environment and our assets.
Outcome	Generating economic and social returns without compromising the sustainability of our natural assets.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£40,000
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/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:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Members Approval to reinstate the viewing platform on Ballycastle Beach, which was destroyed by vandalism in July 2021, and replace the deteriorated footbridge that forms part of the coastal walking route from Runkerry Beach to the Giants Causeway.

2.0 Background

2.1 Runkerry Footbridge

Provision, development and access to quality walking opportunities throughout the Borough are important objectives for the Council's Tourism & Recreation Service. The Council manages and maintains many miles of coastal, rural and urban pathways which provide our citizens and visitors with access to our natural outdoor assets and promotes physical exercise and engagement with nature. Whilst the majority of the Council managed walking experience is on Council owned land, some is jointly maintained with bodies such as the National Trust, Forest Service, TransportNI and in some cases through licence and management agreements with private landowners.

In the mid-1990s the National Trust constructed a footbridge from Council owned property at Runkerry Beach over Runkerry Burn to private lands at Runkerry House to enhance the coastal walking route at Runkerry Head through agreement with Moyle District Council and the private landowner. For a number of years this footbridge was maintained by the National Trust, but due to a shift in policy the NT no longer maintain sections of pathway outside their ownership and maintenance fell to the local authority.

After recent storms the supporting structures were found to be in a very poor condition leaving the bridge in an unsafe condition. After discussion with the private landowner, Council removed the dangerous structure on 13 December 2021 to protect the public from possible injury.

2.2 Ballycastle Beach Boardwalk Viewing Platform

The viewing platform was part of a project to install a new boardwalk at Ballycastle Beach and was implemented by the Tourism and Recreation team with funding from the Rural Development Programme. The total funding for this project was £144,000 and was 75% funded through the Rural Development Programme.

The aim of the Dune & Coastal Management Projects was to provide better access for all to our beautiful coastline while protecting and enhancing our environmental assets plus generating economic and social returns without compromising the sustainability of our natural assets. The vandalism of the viewing platform deprives accessibility to the beach for thousands of people. Wheelchair users; children in prams and those with various mobility issues.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 Runkerry Footbridge

As this footbridge connects council lands to private lands and forms a very important coastal recreational walking asset which is a spur of the Causeway Coast Way/IAT, and in keeping with the Council's approach to securing public access, it is appropriate for Council to enter into a licence agreement with the private landowner to land the new footbridge on their property and design and build a new footbridge.

Officers believe it is necessary to agree a licence to site the footbridge on private lands, design & build a new footbridge conforming to present day Health and Safety requirements. Entering into a licence will secure quality access to one of the most well used coastal paths in the area. As with similar arrangements, Council will agree to undertake regular inspection of the footbridge and provide insurance cover to indemnify

the private landowner. If approved this will be advanced by the Tourism and Recreation team with assistance from Estates Team and Council's legal services. The estimated cost of this project is circa £20,000.

3.2 Ballycastle Beach Boardwalk Viewing Platform

Replace the structure at Ballycastle Beach as per the original specification to include a larch finish for the walls of the viewing platform and treated softwood for the remainder of the structure in line with what was previously constructed. The estimated costs of this project is £20,000.

4.0 Next Steps

Subject to approval, Officers will advance the projects to specification, design and procurement, prior to reverting to the Leisure and Development Committee for an investment decision.

5.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure & Development Committee recommends to Council the advancement of the replacement of Runkerry Footbridge and Ballycastle Viewing Platform and complete on design specification and procurement, prior to reverting to Council for an investment decision.