

Coastal Management – Budget for reactive coastal works

Executive Summary	The existing Coast Protection budget is for the maintenance and repair of coast protection assets. It is increasingly called upon to meet the costs of miscellaneous other coastal-related issues, as, at present there is no specific budget for such works. Cliff-related works includes both reactive works, as required following a cliff slip, such as closure of accesses, signage, etc, and planned works, such as maintenance of routes between the clifftop and the coastal defences below. When these works are required, identifying an appropriate budget can be time-consuming and subject to debate, as each service area already has its own tight budgetary constraints and these works often sit between assets which are the responsibility of Coastal Management, NNDC Assets, Property Services or Leisure Services. This report proposes that a budget is established specifically for reactive works, which council services can request access to, but which sits within and is overseen by the Coastal Management team, which is where the technical expertise and oversight of such works resides.
Options considered	The following options have been considered: 1) The establishment of a dedicated reactive works budget, which rests with the Coastal Management team, but which is separate from any existing budgets. - <i>This is the recommended option.</i> 2) No specific budget is identified, and business continues as usual. - <i>This option is not recommended as it will not facilitate effective timely responses to issues as they arise or provide clarity over budget position.</i>
Consultation(s)	Portfolio Holder for Coast Director for Place and Climate Change CLT
Recommendations	Recommend to Council: The establishment of a dedicated cliff works budget, overseen by the Coastal Management department, and separate from any existing budgets.
Reasons for recommendations	By establishing a dedicated budget for cliff related works, the ambiguity surrounding remedial and emergency works is removed, allowing such issues to be addressed in a timely manner. This new budget provision, which any service area needing cliff related works completed can request access to, should be the responsibility of the Coastal Management team, due to the existing expertise within the team and better ability to align and co-ordinate any necessary spend.

Background papers	N/A
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Wards affected	Coastal, Sheringham South, Sheringham North, Beeston Regis and The Runtons, Cromer Town, Suffield Park, Poppyland, Roughton, Mundesley, Bacton, Happisburgh
Cabinet member	Cllr Blathwayt, Portfolio Holder for Coast
Contact Officers	Tamzen Pope Coastal Engineering Manager Tamzen.pope@north-norfolk.gov.uk Fiona Keenaghan Assistant Coastal Engineer Fiona.keenaghan@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Investing in our local economy & infrastructure A strong responsible & accountable Council
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	This is proposed to be a more efficient way of allocating budgets; it need not lead to an additional cost.
Council Policies & Strategies	Corporate Plan 2023-2027 Climate Impact Assessment Tool

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	No
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	N/A

1. Purpose of the report

1.1. This paper proposes the establishment of a budget to fund, and be used primarily in two distinct ways:

- 1) for reactive works, such as for clearance of cliff failures onto NNDC's assets, remedial works to and clearance of cliff material from access steps and ramps, closures and re-openings of NNDC assets when effected, erection of warning signage, and in other matters as and when necessary; and
- 2) maintenance of cliff accesses, such as steps and ramps down from the clifftop to the beach or promenade.

- 1.2 Overall, the intention is that this budget would be available for miscellaneous (but reasonably frequent and often predictable) coastal-related matters that are in addition to coast defence maintenance and repair.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1. North Norfolk's cliffs are composed of sands, gravels, silts and clays and have been eroding during the thousands of years since the last ice age. These cliffs 'slip', either through large collapses at irregular intervals caused by the action of the waves or rainfall, or through a slow continuous slumping as waterlogged cliffs are dragged down by their own weight. From Weybourne to Happisburgh, there are several notable and many smaller cliff slips each year, some of the larger of which make it into local and national news. Whilst many of these cliff slips are in areas where no action is required, and the material is dispersed gradually by the sea, some slips take place in locations where reactive actions need to be undertaken as a result of fallen cliff material or the safety risk to the public.
- 2.2. These cliff slips cause a myriad of problems which need to be rectified, from causing damage to defences such as revetments and groynes, blocking accesses to and from the beach, and emergency closures of NNDC and other private assets. However, there is no dedicated budget for paying for these works.
- 2.3. Whilst any damage to defences is covered by the Coastal Management 'Coastal Defences' budget, the other effects of and responsibilities resulting from cliff slips are often outside the remit of any existing NNDC budgets. As such, it is proposed to establish a reactive coastal works budget that will set aside funds where they are needed, in reaction to coastal related matters that fall outside of repairs and maintenance responsibilities.

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1. This report seeks authority to establish a dedicated budget for funding reactive works i.e. cliff related works. Options considered are described below.

Options

- 3.2. Option 1 – The establishment of a dedicated revenue based, reactive coastal works budget, to be the responsibility of the Coastal Management Team, and separate from any existing budgets. ***This is the recommended option.***

By establishing a dedicated budget for reactive works i.e. cliff related, the questions of ownership and budget identification for remedial and emergency works is removed. Suitable reactive and, where appropriate, preventative works can take place in a timely manner, in the knowledge that the budget (and budget holder) is identified and available. This new budget is proposed to be the responsibility of the Coastal Management Team, as the technical expertise sits within the team.

- 3.3. Option 2 – No budget is identified, and business continues as usual. ***This option is not recommended.***

The existing issues will continue to be problematic, namely problems with identifying which budget should pay for reactive works, potentially delaying them. Similarly, accesses which sit in the 'grey area' between the sea defences and the cliff top will continue to go unfunded and unmaintained.

4. Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. This report is linked to the Corporate Plan priorities: INVESTING IN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE, A STRONG, RESPONSIBLE & ACCOUNTABLE COUNCIL, PROTECT AND TRANSITION OUR COASTAL ENVIRONMENTS ('Continuing our programme of investment in coastal and resort infrastructure and amenities, building on the progress made in recent years'), and EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DELIVERY ('Providing services that are value for money and meet the needs of our residents').

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1. The most significant implication is the budget itself: A budget of £125,000 is proposed.
- 5.2. Given that the necessary works already take place from existing budgets, there may be commensurate in-year savings if these are in future to be paid for out of the proposed new budget. Aside from the budget requested within this report, the only further significant additional resource implications relate to staffing. However, having this dedicated budget will remove the need for staff to spend time ascertaining which department is responsible for the above-mentioned cliff-related works prior to commissioning them and may well save staff time. As such, it is possible that the existence of this budget may reduce required staffing resource related to cliff related works.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

No comments received

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. This proposal seeks a dedicated budgetary provision for reactive works, including cliff related matters, such as cliff slips. As such, there are no specific legal implications to consider. The legal considerations relating to works themselves will be addressed in any future report seeking authority to undertake said works.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

No comments received

7. Risks

Please refer to the table below of the risks associated with the decision of a cliff budget being assigned or not.

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation
No budget being identified	Medium	Seek Cabinet approval.
Injury to members of the public due to cliff material not being removed from promenades and assets	High	Removal of cliff material on promenade and assets.
Injury to members of the public due to cliff material on promenades and assets and the area not being closed off	High	Close off necessary areas
Injury to members of the public due to inadequate accesses due to lack of maintenance of accesses	High	Repair works to assets
Reputational damage to the Council due to not dealing with cliff material on assets	High	Removal of cliff material on promenade and assets.
Further deterioration of assets due to lack of maintenance	Medium	Available budget to complete the necessary repair works and/or closures
Members of public clearing slip material	Low	NNDC complete the clearing of the slip
Catastrophic failure of a cliff	Medium	Separate budgets would need to be identified

8. Net Zero Target

- 8.1. Climate change has led to increased frequency of coastal erosion related issues, such as cliff slips. This report is focused on the provision of a specific budget to be used to address reactive issues that result from these climatic changes, and other factors. This budget would not be used for routine maintenance e.g. groynes repairs, as this is funded from the Coast Protection budget.
- 8.2. In relation to the Council's Net Zero aspirations and based on findings from the Climate Impact Assessment Tool, the establishment of budget will facilitate better planning and more efficient management of reactive or preventative works. This will allow smarter logistics planning to minimise transportation emissions relating to delivery and removal of machinery on site. This will result in slight reductions of emissions due to planning works accordingly with tide and a more joined up approach to carrying out works in nearby locations.
- 8.3. Further mitigations can potentially be achieved by using manual labour, where possible, to reduce machinery use.
- 8.4. Hard coastal engineering works naturally have high carbon emissions. Due to working conditions further decarbonisation solutions are very challenging and require significant foresight on procurement processes and significantly increased financial spend.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1. There are no implications related to discrimination and the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy as a consequence of the decision being proposed.

10. Community Safety issues

- 10.1. The allocation of a reactive budget will allow the effectiveness of the works to be implemented thus reducing the potential safety issues that could present to communities. This budget will allow a quick reaction to cliff slips in regard to closures and/or damage to cliff assets that could otherwise result in a safety implication to communities.

11.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 11.1 There is a need for a dedicated reactive coastal works budget to ensure the Council is providing the most effective and efficient service to stakeholders, communities and users of coastal areas. Assigning this budget will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of cliff-related works (both reactive works and planned/preventative works), and works will be completed in a timely manner.
- 11.2 The works will be covered within the existing Small Works Measured Term Contract (SW MTC).
- 11.3 It is recommended that Cabinet resolves to:

Recommend to Council:

- A. The establishment of a dedicated reactive coastal works budget (£125k), administered by the Coastal Management Team.**