

Subject:	The Living Coast – Management strategy refresh 2020 - 2025		
Date of Meeting:	29 September 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Sarah Dobson	Tel: 01273 294720
	Email:	Sarah.dobson@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the refreshed management strategy of The Living Coast, Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, for the period 2020 – 2025, and seek endorsement from the city council.
- 1.2 The Living Coast is Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve and was designated as such in 2014. The city council is the lead partner.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee endorses the refreshed management strategy for The Living Coast on behalf of the city council.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the update on key projects being developed and delivered by The Living Coast.
- 2.3 That the Committee encourages elected members to champion and support The Living Coast biosphere programme in their work and wards.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Living Coast, Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere Region was designated in 2014 as an international demonstration area for sustainability, part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of over 700 sites (including seven in the UK) that “inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today”.
- 3.2 The city council is the lead partner of the Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership, composed of over 40 local organisations active to pursue the Biosphere objectives.
- 3.3 The Biosphere programme is directed by the Biosphere Delivery Board, composed of 20 organisations that represent a range of sectors and areas, with a

Chair and Vice-chair appointed from partner bodies. The Chair is currently held by Brighton & Hove Bus Company.

3.4 UNESCO designates each Biosphere Reserve for a period of 10 years. This refreshed management strategy updates the previous management strategy that has been in place since our designation as Biosphere Reserve in 2014. This updated strategy covers the period 2020 – 2025 including our application for re-designation as a Biosphere by 2024.

3.5 All global Biosphere Reserves share three core objectives: (i) Conservation of nature and culture (ii) sustainable development (iii) knowledge, awareness and engagement. This refreshed management strategy details 2 strategic themes under each of the 3 core objectives:

- Conservation of nature & culture:
 - Urban greening; and
 - Strengthening our natural capital.
- Sustainable development:
 - Thriving communities – health wellbeing & economy; and
 - Climate change and carbon.
- Knowledge, awareness and engagement:
 - Awareness, understanding and engagement with The Living Coast;
 - The Living Coast as a site for research and knowledge sharing.

3.6 These 6 strategic themes will guide The Living Coast’s decision making and project work over the short, medium and longer term. They also help identify how The Living Coast’s actions are contributing to delivering the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The short to medium term actions have been developed with consideration of our changed global outlook in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the aim of supporting a sustainable and prosperous recovery throughout The Living Coast.

3.7 In the short to medium term the following key projects are being developed, delivered or supported under the strategic themes:

- Urban greening:
 - **Changing Chalk – Greening the Cities:** Changing Chalk is a project partnership led by the National Trust, aiming to deliver both conservation and societal benefits for landscape and local communities in the Sussex Downs. The partnership was awarded £138,300 development funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in October 2019 and will be submitting a full delivery funding application to NLHF for £2.2million in Summer 2021 with supporting match funding from BHCC. It is anticipated that a separate report will be brought to committee ahead of the full bid submission in 2021. The Living Coast lead on the development of the Greening the Cities activity, which aims to bring the Downs into the towns through the creation of new areas of urban green space in Brighton & Hove, utilising local down land flora to support pollinators. The objectives of Greening the Cities are: to engage a wider diversity of people with the Sussex Downs to increase their wellbeing and connection with the landscape; inspire change in ideas and actions to encourage active participation in caring for the Sussex Downs,

- sustaining its long-term future; and improve habitat and species richness and the connectivity of the rare chalk grassland.
- Strengthening our natural capital:
 - **The Aquifer Partnership:** The Living Coast initiated a project working to protect the aquifer under the South Downs with the South Downs National Park, Environment Agency, Natural England and Southern Water in 2014. This project evolved into the Brighton chalk catchment management partnership (CHaMP) for an initial 5 year phase 2015-2020. In Spring 2020 CHaMP was rebranded as The Aquifer Partnership for a second phase 2020-2025. Brighton and Hove City Council is a key delivery partner for The Aquifer Partnership's urban programme. The Living Coast continues to support the urban and rural programmes, with the principle aim of the project to protect and improve the quality of groundwater in the Brighton chalk aquifer to ensure it remains a sustainable resource for public water supply.
 - Thriving communities – health, wellbeing and economy:
 - **Bio Cultural Heritage Tourism:** This 3 year project (April 2018 – December 2021, total value €4.3million) is funded by the Interreg channel programme with local match funding by BHCC. It is a partnership between 4 Biosphere Reserves: The Living Coast and North Devon in the UK, and the Marais Audomarois and Iroise Isles and Sea in Northern France, who share the common challenge of being popular tourist destinations alongside internationally important for environmental and cultural heritage. This project aims to increase the economic value of tourism based on our natural and cultural resources, whilst reducing its environmental impact. As the focus of this project is the local visitor economy it has been significantly impacted by Covid-19. The project outcomes have been pivoted to reflect this, with an increased focus on supportive marketing for local partner businesses over the next 6 months. This project works closely with the Stanmer Park restoration project. In Spring 2021 The Living Coast will host a week-long conference and study tour for all project partners, local and international stakeholders.
 - Climate change and carbon:
 - **Carbon neutral 2030:** All 3 local authorities on The Living Coast board (BHCC, Adur and Worthing District Council, Lewes District Council) have declared climate emergencies. The Living Coast is supporting the development of BHCC's carbon neutral 2030 plan and convening a focus group on chalk landscape and marine carbon management. This group is collating an overview of existing research via the UK network of Biosphere Reserves and the local nature partnership and supporting the call to DEFRA to review and expand the currently published landscape carbon metrics, which are limited to woodland creation and peat bog restoration.
 - Knowledge, awareness and engagement:
 - **Nature2020 and the City Nature Challenge:** Nature2020 was developed to mark the end of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, through a programme of community led events celebrating biodiversity in the biosphere. After a successful launch

event in January 2020 the Nature2020 programme was heavily impacted by Covid-19 with nearly all public events cancelled. The City Nature Challenge was able to be reframed as an online only event. The Living Coast participated in this global biodiversity recording citizen science challenge for the first time, achieving participation from nearly 400 recorders and identifiers, logging 600 species and 1937 observations from across The Living Coast. We plan to build on our experience by participating in the City Nature Challenge again in 2021. The Nature2020 steering group has recently reconvened after a large number of members were furloughed, with the aim of exploring creative, online opportunities to mark the end of the Decade on Biodiversity in the absence of physical events.

- **The Living Coast marketing and communications review:** stakeholder engagement for the refresh of The Living Coast management strategy identified a lack of consistency of understanding of The Living Coast's purpose and value, creating a barrier to wider public and organisational engagement. To address this, marketing and communications review work is being undertaken in partnership with Cobb Digital who are members of the Living Coast delivery board. This work will also support the marketing planned as part of the Bio Cultural Heritage Tourism project.

- 3.8 The BHCC Corporate Plan 2020 – 2023 'A Fairer City, A Sustainable Future', includes a priority to: 'promote and protect biodiversity'.
- 3.9 At Full Council in December 2018 it was unanimously agreed to support the motion to 'Declare(s) its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies;' and to 'consider how the Council can strengthen local protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecosystems services under available powers'.
- 3.10 The WWF Global Futures report, published February 2020, estimates the 'cost to the world economy from the loss of nature in a 'business as usual scenario' by 2050' at 'US\$10trillion'.
- 3.11 The 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services notes that: 'Nature is essential for human existence and good quality of life', that 'Marine and terrestrial ecosystems are the sole sinks for anthropogenic carbon emissions', and that 'around 1 million species already face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss'.
- 3.12 Supporting and enhancing biodiversity and nature locally, nationally and internationally will be an essential action in meeting the Council's target to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.13 BHCC support The Living Coast as the lead partner of the delivery board, financially contributing £20k p/a plus on costs to cover 50% of the Biosphere programme manager's salary as well as hosting the Biosphere Programme Manager within the Sustainability Team, plus additional funding or match funding

in kind as agreed on a project by project basis. Other Biosphere Board members contribute the remaining 50% of the Biosphere programme manager's salary and additional project funding on a project by project basis. BHCC support The Living Coast programme additionally with staff time in administration, across multiple Departments as appropriate on a project by project basis, and through regular senior level attendance at Board meetings.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 No alternative options are deemed necessary for consideration currently.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 The city council has actively participated in the development of the refreshed management strategy over the past 18 months as lead partner of the delivery board.

5.2 The management strategy has been developed with engagement and input from The Living Coast partnership and board, which includes community, cultural and private sector organisation, national bodies, universities and local authorities.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 To support, strengthen and enhance nature conservation, sustainable development and knowledge, awareness and engagement with the environment across the city and Biosphere Reserve area, and contribute to climate change mitigation, the Committee is requested to endorse the refreshed Living Coast management strategy and champion The Living Coast designation and programme.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. It is assumed that any costs associated with the refreshed management strategy for The Living Coast and the other recommendations are contained within existing budgets. This will be reviewed as part of the budget monitoring process.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jess Laing

Date: 10/09/2020

Legal Implications:

7.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 14th September 2020

Equalities Implications:

7.3 The Living Coast biosphere aims to be inclusive and enable people from all backgrounds and needs benefit from a connection to the natural environment. The Living Coast management strategy 2020-2025 is owned by The Living Coast board, therefore a BHCC Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 Sustainable development is a core requirement and objective of The Living Coast biosphere programme.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 none

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 none

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 Spending time in natural environments has been shown to be beneficial to physical and mental health and wellbeing. Supported and well-functioning biodiversity and eco-systems provide a huge variety of public health benefits including air quality improvement, urban heat-island reduction, water quality and quantity improvements, food production amongst many others.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.8 The Living Coast Biosphere designation supports the council's priority to 'promote and protect biodiversity' and to be a carbon neutral city by 2030.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. The Living Coast Management Strategy 2020 - 2025

Background Documents

1. None