COAST PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Summary

Aberdeenshire has around 200 kilometres of coastline. This coastline is of varying forms including hard rock cliffs, softer more erodible cliffs and slopes (composed of glacial or relic beach material), wide sandy beaches and narrow shingle/cobble beaches.

The legal framework guiding coastal protection works, particularly those aimed at preventing erosion and sea encroachment, is outlined in the Coast Protection Act 1949. The powers granted to Local Coast Protection Authorities are permissive and do not impose a statutory obligation on the Council to take immediate action.

The Coast Protection Act 1949 defines the Council as the Coast Protection Authority for Aberdeenshire and sets out its powers in relation to the protection of the coast against erosion and encroachment by the sea.

Policy Status	**Approved and finalised by Infrastructure Services Committee on 22/08/2024**
Responsible Officer	Lee Watson, Principal Engineer, Roads and Infrastructure
Policy Sponsor	Philip McKay, Head of Service, Roads and Infrastructure
Authorised By	Infrastructure Services Committee
Policy Review Date	August 2029

1. Policy Statement

Aberdeenshire Council recognises the importance of protecting public and private infrastructure from adverse impacts from the sea and will cooperate with affected communities to minimise those impacts.

We will:

- Maintain existing coast protection works constructed by, or for, the Council, or the previous coast protection authority
- When made aware of maintenance issues associated with private coast protection works contact the private owner(s) and inform them of their maintenance obligations
- Subject to a positive Cost Benefit Analysis, consider the provision of new coast protection works where necessary to protect:

    - Public roads
    - Amenity land, infrastructure and buildings owned by Aberdeenshire Council
- Subject to a positive Cost Benefit Analysis, and appropriate contributions from beneficiaries, consider the provision of new coast protection works where necessary to protect:
    - Established communities from erosion
    - Individual houses and small groups of houses
- Provide advice and guidance to communities impacted by coastal erosion

2. Scope of Policy

Definitions:

- “Coast protection work” means any construction work or alteration, improvement, repair, maintenance, demolition or removal for the purpose of the protection of any land and includes the sowing or planting of vegetation for the said purpose.
- “Protection” means protection against erosion or encroachment by the sea.
- “Sea” includes the waters of any channel, creek, bay or estuary and of any river so far up that river as the tide flows.
- “Seashore” means the bed and shore of the sea, and of every channel, creek, bay or estuary, and of every river as far up that river as the tide flows, and any cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or other land adjacent to the shore.

3. Policy Principles & Equalities

The Director of Environment & Infrastructure Services is responsible for implementing the Council’s Coast Protection Policy.

The Head of Roads and Infrastructure has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council’s Coast Protection activities are carried out in line with the policy.

The Flood Risk and Coast Protection unit is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Council’s Coast Protection policy. The unit is responsible to the Head of Roads and Infrastructure for the inspection and recording of the condition of the coast protection assets, the design, procurement and undertaking of any works required in accordance with the policy and allocated budget.

During the development of this policy consideration has been given to reducing inequalities of opportunity for people with protected characteristics and inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

4. Supporting Policies and Documents

Aberdeenshire Coastal Change Adaptation Plan - Regional Plan

5. Council Strategic Priorities

Pillar	Priority	How does the policy reflect the Council's strategic Priorities?
A sustainable economy	We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.	Protects public roads and Council owned infrastructure from coastal erosion, ensuring economic activity and transport routes remain secure. Supports tourism and local businesses by maintaining amenity land and coastal assets.
Connected communities	We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.	Engages and cooperates with affected communities, providing advice and guidance on coastal erosion. Encourages shared responsibility and partnership working to develop solutions for coastal challenges.
Living well locally	We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.	Safeguards established communities and individual homes from erosion, contributing to safety and wellbeing. Maintains access to recreational coastal areas, supporting healthy and active lifestyles.

6. Policy Revision

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
2	November 2025	22/08/2024	Policy updated to revised template. No fundamental changes.

7. Policy Distribution

Name	Designation	Organisation
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Aberdeenshire COUNCIL

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