

Irvine Beach Coastal Study – Overview

North Ayrshire Council has undertaken a study considering how the Irvine Beach area has changed and is likely to change in the future. This was prompted by issues raised in the Ayrshire Shoreline Management Plan, as well as the anticipated increased pressures from the Great Harbour Master Plan.

Particular focus has been given to:

- The importance of maintaining the natural function of the dunes
- The important recreational and amenity value, specifically maintaining the connectivity of the area
- The failing defences in front of the Dragon viewing point and the old spoil heap



Coastal Change

The shoreline, in the past, has undergone significant change both naturally and as a result of change to the management of the Harbour entrance. Currently, the dunes are eroding. As the general shoreline sets back, this has exposed the existing gabion defence to higher waves, for which they were not designed.

With Climate Change, in particular with sea level rise, the pressure from erosion increases.

- While recognising the uncertainty as to how rapidly sea level rise is happening, sea level may realistically be expected to increase by around 0.5m over the next fifty years (potentially by as much as 1.2m over the next 100 years)

This poses significant challenges:

- For the way in which we manage the dunes, allowing width within which their natural development may be allowed to continue
- For the way in which we maintain safe access through the dunes to the foreshore, without damage to the dunes and still maintaining the dunes capacity to change
- As to whether there is a need to manage and improve the existing defences or the implications should it be decided to remove these defences

This Consultation

Understanding the ongoing process of change frames the discussion about future management. **This consultation aims to raise the awareness of these issues.**

The underlying principle for management is to allow the coast to develop naturally.

However, there are important decisions that follow from this, in terms of influencing the way in which the area is used and the possibility for imposing some form of control.

Any sustainable approach to management has to be developed in open discussion with the those who use the area, those who manage the area, alongside other stakeholders. Some basic questions are posed but we would value views on any of the issues being raised.