

P-06-1367 Fund the removal of quarry rocks and the restoration of sand and groynes to Llandudno North Shore

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Ionawr 2024
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Reference: SR23/7337-6

Petition Number: P-06-1367

Petition title: Fund the removal of quarry rocks and the restoration of sand and groynes to Llandudno North Shore

Text of petition: In 2014 Conwy County Borough Council dumped a further 50,000 tonnes of oversized and untested quarry rocks onto North Shore. This action destroyed the beach. Access for many is almost impossible, and dangerous if people try. It's a blight on the landscape, and detrimental to our main economy, tourism.



1. Background

1.1. Flood risk in Llandudno North Shore

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) estimates that around 245,000 properties are at risk of flooding in Wales and classifies the Llandudno shore as an area with high flood risk from the sea. Climate projections predict that sea-level will rise between 890 mm and 1210 mm alongside the Conwy coastline by 2120.

Coastal rock structures protect against erosion and sea level rise by absorbing wave energy. Current coastal defences on the Llandudno North Shore include a gravel/cobble beach and flood/dwarf walls.

Winter storms in 2013-14 caused a reduction in beach levels and flooding in the promenade. Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) imported around 30,000m³ of gravel cobble to replenish the beach. In response to this petition, the Minister give further detail on the historic installation of groynes and cobble on Llandudno North Shore, and highlights that the 2014 replenishment of cobble is:

... the same material, from the same quarry put in to the same design profile. The material was tested independently and was not oversized as it met the grading envelope in the design specified. The 2014 works did not do anything new but only replaced what had been lost from the 2000 scheme due to tidal and storm influences.

1.2. Tourism

The Llandudno Coastal Forum (LCF) and members of the public have shown support for a sand beach with timber groynes, to strengthen tourism in the area. The CCBC reports that tourism provides almost a quarter of all employment in the area and around £996 million to the local economy each year, according to pre-Covid estimates. CCBC estimates that the tourism sector in Llandudno is worth £384 million and supports more than 5,300 jobs (pre-Covid estimates). In response to this petition, the Minister says:

Llandudno is thriving from a tourism point of view and there is a sand beach at Llandudno west shore just 0.75m away.

1.3. Policy context

The Welsh Government is responsible for setting out the national flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) strategy. Its most recent National Strategy was published in 2020. The local authority is responsible for local flood risk management strategy. For CCBC this is set out in the Conwy Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee gives advice and support to Welsh Minister and RMAs on flood and coastal risk management in Wales.

Through the Welsh Government's FCERM Programme, local authorities can bid for funding to reduce the risk of flood and coastal erosion. The Welsh Government also allocates funding through the Coastal Risk Management Programme (CRMP), which supplements the core programme.

More information can be found in this Senedd Research briefing.

1.4. Conwy County Borough Council action

In 2021-2022, CCBC secured funding through the CRMP for an Outline Business Case (OBC), to consider options to reduce flooding in the area. It proposed CCBC apply for 100% Welsh Government funding for the scheme's design and development costs, and 85% of the scheme construction costs. CCBC proposed to fund 15% of the construction costs from internal Council resources and external partners.

In August 2022, the Welsh Government told the CCBC that the sand conversion cannot be funded through the CRMP since it does not provide additional flood protection despite a high cost (almost £24 million, £17 million more compared with raising the promenade wall, which would provide the same level of flood defence). In September 2022, CCBC accepted funding from the CRMP to continue with the non-sand option for the improvement of coastal defences.

In response to this petition, the Minister clarifies that “a sand beach could be put on part of North Shore”, however it would be outside the scope of the CRMP, and therefore would require “significant ongoing revenue burden” for the CCBC.

2. Welsh Parliament action

In 2018, Janet Finch-Saunders MS asked the Cabinet Secretary three times about the Welsh Government's commitment towards converting Llandudno North Shore to a sandy beach. In response, the [then] Minister of Environment highlighted that it's the responsibility of the local authority to decide on the most appropriate solution to reduce flood risk.

In Plenary in February 2023, Janet Finch-Saunders MS asked the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, about the steps she intends to take to make sure both coastal defences and a sandy beach are guaranteed in Llandudno. In response, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, said:

... the Welsh Government have recently awarded grant funding to Conwy County Borough Council to develop a full business case for Llandudno, based on maintaining and improving the existing cobble defence on the north shore. The alternative sand option provides no additional flood benefit, at a much greater cost to the coastal risk management programme, and that's the problem. So, whilst I completely understand what you're saying about the sandy beach, the coastal risk management programme is for coastal risk management; it's not for tourist attractions and other aesthetic value. I'm not denying the value of that; I'm just saying that's not what the programme is for.

So, if Conwy County Borough Council want to get an alternative sand option at Llandudno north shore, they really need to look for alternative sources of funding.

In Plenary in May 2023, Janet Finch-Saunders MS described the rocks at Llandudno North Shore as "anti-tourism".

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.