
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

20 February 2024

Cabinet

Title: International Marine Science & Environment (IMSE)
Ayrshire Growth Deal project - Collaboration Agreement

Purpose: This report outlines progress in developing a business case pathway for Ayrshire Growth Deal investment in IMSE with partners Field Studies Council and University of Stirling.

Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet approves:

- i) The strategic direction for the IMSE project
- ii) The establishment of a Collaboration Agreement between the Council, Field Studies Council and University of Stirling to develop related project activity

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out progress in developing interventions for an International Marine Science & Environment (IMSE) project as part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) within North Ayrshire.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval of a Collaboration Agreement with partners Field Studies Council (FSC) and University of Stirling (UoS) to co-develop an outline business case.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Ayrshire Growth Deal, which was signed in November 2020, committed £250m to the Ayrshire region co-funded by UK and Scottish Governments and the three Ayrshire Councils. North Ayrshire's portfolio of growth deal projects includes a £10.5m investment towards marine science at Ardrossan.
- 2.2 Since 2020 North Ayrshire has been in discussions on the potential for collaborating on innovation driven economic development with a specific focus on the blue economy (as defined in the Ayrshire Growth Deal). The UoS produced a pathway finder analysis report for NAC during 2021, which highlighted a potentially nationally and globally significant opportunity to create a blue economy innovation programme, headquartered at IMSE and delivered through the Ayrshire Growth Deal. To advance the concept of the blue economy programme and to create a business case for the IMSE project (the "Business Case"), NAC and UoS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in February 2022.

- 2.3 Since 2022, NAC and UoS have engaged in discussions with FSC to develop the opportunity further. Enhancing the offering at FSC and forging strong partnerships with the blue economy could significantly contribute to marine science, and blue economy research, development, and innovation in the region as well as being a cost effective and lower risk option for delivery.
- 2.4 It is proposed that a Collaboration Agreement will be entered with FSC and UoS to develop and maintain a collaborative relationship to successfully create an outline business case for the IMSE project. The partnership looks to determine the nature of interventions required for the Project, including research and analysis, concept design work for infrastructure, and challenge awards. Long and short-listing exercises will be conducted for available options, aligning with the requirement outlined in HM Treasury's Green Book.
- 2.5 The agreement will be timebound for 2 years to achieve an outline business case to be submitted to UK and Scottish Government and create a plan of works required for the creation of the full business case, or phased full business cases, and corresponding procurement works.
- 2.6 Each party has agreed to contribute up to a maximum of £50,000 to support the work required by this agreement with each party role being defined as below.

Party	Role
North Ayrshire Council	Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) Project Management & RPMO Liaison AGD reporting to Scottish & UK Government Funder Growth Deals link (Ayrshire Growth Deal)
Field Studies Council	Site Operator expertise Landowner Island community engagement
University of Stirling	Academic, Innovation & Enterprise expertise Business Case Development Economic Modelling Growth Deals link (Argyll & Bute, Stirling and Clackmannanshire)

3. Proposals

3.1

It is recommended that Cabinet approves:

- iii) The strategic direction for the IMSE project
- iv) The establishment of a Collaboration Agreement between the Council, Field Studies Council and University of Stirling to develop related project activity

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications. Project development activity related to the proposals may require advance funding through Ayrshire Growth Deal, as allocated within approved capital budgets.

Human Resources

4.2 No direct implication.

Legal

4.3 The recommendation for the establishment of a Collaboration Agreement partnership with Field Studies Council and University of Stirling, has been developed with support from Legal Services.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 All project and programme work will be subject to equality impact assessment.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 Any statutory requirement related to environmental impact will be undertaken; however, in addition, the Ayrshire Growth Deal business case requirements include carbon scoring and measures to mitigate and carbon increases.

Key Priorities

4.6 This Ayrshire Growth Deal project looks to contribute to the regions vision for Ayrshire to be 'a vibrant, outward looking, confident region, attractive to investors and visitors, making a major contribution to Scotland's growth and local well-being, and leading the implementation of digital technologies and the next generation of manufacturing.' It also aims to promote activity to feed into North Ayrshires priorities of wellbeing, community, climate change and sustainability.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 It is anticipated that the impact of the paper will support development of interventions that will support the Community Wealth Building strategy by supporting job creation and skills and employability opportunities, supporting investment in North Ayrshire, supporting a just transition to net zero and securing anchor institutions within North Ayrshire – all of which are likely to have positive equality impacts.

5. Consultation

5.1 The content of the report has been developed and informed by engagement with sector leads from and academic, private, and public sector perspective. It is recommended that subject to the approval of this report, an ongoing programme of action is developed, which includes engagement with communities to shape and influence the wider programme development.

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Director, Place

For further information please contact **Neale McIlvanney, Interim Head of Service (Growth, Investment and Employability)**, on nealemcilvanney@north-ayrshire.gov.uk.

Background Papers

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