
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

25 May 2021

Cabinet

Title: The Great Harbour, Irvine

Purpose: To update Cabinet on the development of proposals for Ayrshire Growth Deal investment in the Great Harbour, Irvine.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Support the further development of proposals to the Full Business Case or tender stage once formal approval of the Outline Business Case has been confirmed by the Scottish Government, with associated expenditure of up to £635,000; and,
- b) Support further engagement with the community on a development framework and detailed designs for the Great Harbour.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report updates Cabinet on work to develop proposals for Irvine Harbourside through the Maritime Mile project, supported by funding of £14M through the Ayrshire Growth Deal.
- 1.2 The Maritime Mile proposals involve an investment in placemaking, destination development and tourism through three activity hubs including:
 - The development of a maritime hub including the creation of additional event and exhibition space for the Maritime Museum alongside new slip ways and moorings;
 - The development of an events/arts/leisure/food/ commercial activity zone within the central Harbourside area; and,
 - A major new play/park facility at Irvine Beach Park.
- 1.3 The proposals support the wider development of Irvine Harbourside, with the wider project to be known as the Great Harbour. The area will be developed as a visitor destination and will enable a step change in the number of visitors attracted to Irvine, supporting additional business investment and employment.
- 1.4 The Council has developed concept designs for the Maritime Mile to help secure funding through the Ayrshire Growth Deal business case process and in line with the adopted Local Development Plan. An Outline Business Case has been submitted to the Scottish Government with approval expected imminently, allowing the proposals to be developed in more detail to Full Business Case stage.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Great Harbour is a key tourism led regeneration, placemaking and destination development project. Concept design work has been developed to build on earlier community engagement as well as proof of concept work on the tourism potential of the area by Glasgow Caledonian University.
- 2.2 The Great Harbour includes the entire Irvine Harbourside and Beach Park area between the railway station and coast and including the southern end of the Ardeer Peninsula. Historically the area saw major investment through Irvine Development Corporation in the Beach Park and Harbourside Housing Conservation Area. More recently, the area has seen successful investment by local businesses, while the Council are currently constructing a social housing development of 71 units.
- 2.3 Within this, the Maritime Mile area connects Irvine town centre in the east, to the beach in the west. The funding secured for the Maritime Mile through the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) will be focused on three hub areas. The AGD investment seek to enable or lever further private sector investment in the area, including commercial, leisure/tourism and residential development in line with the adopted Local Development Plan. The plan/visuals attached at Appendix 1 illustrate the proposals for the Maritime Mile which are described further below.

AGD Investment - The Maritime Mile

- 2.4 The development of proposals for the area have been informed by community engagement in recent years which commenced through the development of the Irvine Vision. The Irvine Vision sought to identify community priorities for regeneration and placemaking and included a focus on Irvine Harbourside as one of five key areas. As well as the implementation of town centre investments such as the High Street and The Circuit, this engagement subsequently led to the successful promotion of the Irvine Harbourside area for investment through the Ayrshire Growth Deal.
- 2.5 The Maritime Mile will see a significant investment in placemaking that is intended to be an enabler for wider investment. It will offer an enhanced visitor experience and draw people into the Harbour Waterfront and Beach Park, attracting additional visitors to North Ayrshire. Key aims for the Maritime Mile include:
- Improved connections between the town centre and the Beach Park through enhanced public realm and park/greenspace.
 - The creation of hubs for activity that drive, visitors (with a range of interests), investment and employment; and,
 - Support for the Council's Community Wealth Building strategy through the creation of jobs, expansion of local businesses and best use of land and assets.
- 2.6 The Design Concept for the Maritime Mile includes three activity hubs, described below:

i) Coastal Hub

This aims to create improved facilities for play and outdoor activity through the provision of a new play facility within the Beach Park. The development framework will also make provision for the development of projects in the longer term including:

- the re-use of the Pilot House;
- the re-development of the Beach Pavilion as a commercial café/restaurant;
- new residential development on land allocated within the adopted LDP; and,
- consideration of a future for the Big idea building

ii) Marina/Arts/Events/Food Hub

This will see the creation of enhanced public realm within the Central Harbourside area which contains the Harbour Arts Centre/Watersports Club/Ship Inn and GRO. A new waterfront Plaza will help to support events and better access to marine activities through an upgrading of the existing pontoons and slipways.

The former Harbourmasters Office and land to the rear offers the potential to accommodate new business in food production and sale, and to help create an area that increasingly becomes a destination for its food offer.

iii) Maritime HUB

The Maritime Hub will aim to create expanded facilities for the National Maritime Museum Scotland (NMMS), with a broadening of its offer through new exhibitions, and additional event and exhibition space including space for the NMMS Arts Collection. NMMS are developing proposals for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund within a view to securing a funding contribution towards the capital investment required. It is envisaged that new facility will be developed adjacent to the existing Puffer Café.

Wider Development Framework

2.7 As noted above, the Maritime Mile proposals will be the first phase of development within the wider Great Harbour area. The proposals will create an enhanced place, increased visitor numbers and hence a context for additional private sector investment. The Great Harbour area will include provision for commercial and residential development opportunities, with the exact scale and location of these to be considered further through public engagement. This will inform the production of a development framework for the area.

2.8 It is recognised that any development framework will require careful consideration of parking and road infrastructure, given the potential development of areas currently occupied by parking. Parking provision of at least an equivalent level will require to be provided. In addition, any new road or parking infrastructure will require to consider:

- Access to areas of demand to ensure that parking is located where it is required;
 - The requirement of users or special interest groups;
 - The impact of any development on open spaces; and,
 - Creating an improved pedestrian and active travel environment.
- 2.9 Specific consideration will be given to parking, access and sustainable transport through a transport assessment.

Public Engagement and Next Steps

- 2.10 Approval for an Outline Business Case for the Maritime Mile proposals by the Scottish Government is expected imminently. That will provide their approval for the principle of the proposals and associated expenditure. It will allow the proposals to proceed to detailed design work and the tender returns required for Full Business Case approval/project implementation.
- 2.11 As part of this process the Maritime Mile concept will be the subject of public engagement, building on earlier engagement in 2017. This will also inform work on a development framework for the Great Harbour area which will be presented to the Council's Planning Committee for approval.
- 2.12 The long-term nature of the proposals should be recognised, with some of the proposals (e.g. commercial leisure, residential) following initial investment in placemaking, while the proposals for NMMS will require additional feasibility and funding support. It is envisaged that initial priorities for detailed design will include:
- Beach Park Play facility.
 - Marine/Arts/Events/Food hub including the development of the former Harbourmasters House and placemaking improvements.
 - NMMS feasibility; and,
 - Transport assessment, considering the impact of the proposals on parking and access in details.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a) Support the further development of proposals to the Full Business Case or tender stage once formal approval of the Outline Business Case has been confirmed by the Scottish Government, with associated expenditure of up to £635,000; and,
 - b) Support further engagement with the community on a development framework and detailed designs for the Great Harbour.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 The budget for investment in the Maritime Mile project within the Great Harbour is £14.0m (AGD £9m / NAC £5m). A significant level of flexibility or contingency has been allowed for, reflecting the early stage of project development at Outline Business Case stage.

- 4.2 Expenditure of up to £635,000 is required to develop the proposals to detailed or Full Business Case stage.

Human Resources

- 4.3 There are no human resource implications arising from the report.

Legal

- 4.4 Officers continue to work with external partners in the context of agreed Memorandum of Understandings.
- 4.5 Where the proposals involve the development of land adjacent to Irvine Harbour, the proposals will require to recognise legal conditions relating to the effective operation of the Harbour.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.6 The Maritime Mile will support the regeneration of the Harbourside and Beach Park, supporting local businesses and creating new Community Wealth Building employment and business opportunities. All proposals will ensure compliance with the Equality Act.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.7 Proposals for development will be subject to best practice sustainability practices.

Key Priorities

- 4.8 The Maritime Mile will support the key ambitions contained within the 'Making Waves' action plan, developed by North Ayrshire Council and the North Ayrshire Tourism Industry. The proposals also support:
- The Council Plan through "Growing our Economy, increasing employment and regenerating our towns".
 - National tourism priorities identified in the Tourism Scotland 2020 strategy by helping to make Scotland a "first choice destination for a high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience delivered by skilled and passionate people".
 - Community Wealth Building, by ensuring that procurement, contracts, and skills programmes are aligned with the CWB strategy and promoting the best use of our land and assets.

Community Wealth Building

4.9 The Maritime Mile supports community area regeneration priorities identified within the Irvine Vision, supporting increased visitor spend in the local economy, with an improved environment that supports local jobs and businesses.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Council have been working with a range of potential partners who have an interest in the area, including National Maritime Museum Scotland (NMMS), NPL Estates, and Crown Estates Scotland.

5.2 A full Consultation & Engagement Plan will be developed as part of the next stages of work. This work will build on the initial consultation undertaken as part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal proposals and historical work undertaken in the development of the Irvine Vision.

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Appendix 1 – Concept Plans

