From: **Jamie Henderson-Cabinet Member for Coastal Regeneration and Environment**

Simon Jones-Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 November 2026**

Subject: **Briefing on draft Kent Plan Sea**

Decision no: n/a

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: County-wide

Is the decision eligible for call-in? n/a

Summary: Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment. It recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist. Plan Sea has been developed through workshops and conversations with agencies, delivery partners and coastal stakeholders.

This paper presents the draft Plan Sea ahead of consultation.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the paper and draft Plan Sea document and endorse the Plan to proceed to public consultation.

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1. The need for Plan Sea

1.1 With over 350 miles, Kent has one of the longest county coastlines in England and our identity is strongly linked to our coastal and marine borders.

1.2 The coastal and marine environment faces many pressures:

- water quality degradation from land-based and sea-based activities and development
- climate change impacts, such as warming waters and coastal squeeze
- coastal erosion and flooding
- habitat damage and loss
- over exploitation
- impacts of resource extraction
- recreational disturbance
- invasive species
- damage to cultural and heritage sites

1.3 The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy aims to address the decline of nature but, for our coastal and marine ecosystem, it is limited to the intertidal area. However, the importance of recovering our natural environment doesn't stop at the low tide mark. There is the need to extend the benefits of managing our terrestrial habitats to offshore and dedicate the same level of effort for our marine environments as our terrestrial ones.

1.4 The success of the Local Naure Recovery Strategy is limited by some key challenges outside of its scope, in particular: coastal and marine pollution, marine management, human pressures and disturbance and invasive species.

1.5 Marine and coastal systems present unique restoration challenges linked to wave dynamics, shifting sediments, and climate change. Human pressures are similarly complex: land-based activities affect coastal waters through runoff, and multiple marine activities can overlap spatially or temporally.

1.6 Additionally, governance and regulatory responsibilities in marine areas are distributed across numerous organisations, making collaboration and partnership working essential, but this collaboration does not always occur.

1.7 There are a number of stakeholders with an interest in a clean, productive and biologically diverse coastal and marine environment and a number of bodies with statutory responsibility for various aspects of its management. Despite the number of stakeholders with an interest or responsibility, our coastal and marine habitats do not provide the healthy and productive environment we might aspire to and there is a lack of join-up across this strategic agenda.

1.8 We also need collective effort to secure a better baseline of data – improvements are needed in coastal and marine data collection and reporting and what is collected needs to be collated and stored in one place, building a bigger and better picture of Kent's coastal and marine habitats and species.

1.9 These challenges for coastal and marine recovery have been identified through workshops and conversations with agencies, delivery partners and coastal stakeholders. This work has also identified key areas they believe a coordinated, partnership approach is needed.

2. The purpose of Plan Sea

2.1 Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment and to ensure this aim is integrated across the authority.

2.2 Plan Sea recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist.

2.3 As Responsible Authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Kent County Council is already working with partners to facilitate delivery of the strategy's coastal ambition. But restoration of our coastal and marine areas requires action outside the scope of the Local Nature Recovery

Strategy, and Plan Sea addresses this by also focussing on challenges which have a huge influence, such as water pollution, people engagement and management.

2.4 Plan Sea also addresses the spatial gap left by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy by extending the ambitions beyond the Strategy's remit of mean low water mark.

2.5 Plan Sea will:

- Enable and facilitate collaborative work to recover our marine and coastal environment, working towards clean, healthy, adaptable and resilient habitats.
- Establish partnerships and project working groups to tackle the pressures on our marine and coastal environment. It will enhance the work of individual organisations across Kent's coastline, including those with statutory duties to make sure they are working effectively.
- Ensure delivery of the coastal ambition of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and extend this ambition to our marine areas, ensuring action works for the benefit of the whole marine ecosystem.
- Apply an integrated management approach, so the socio-economic benefits of a healthy coastal and marine environment can be realised by Kent's coastal communities.
- Compliment and support the delivery of national coastal and marine targets, focusing on halting biodiversity loss and restoring ocean health.
- Advocate and champion for the better recognition, management and protection of our coastal and marine environment, locally and nationally.

3. Plan Sea aims and objectives

3.1 Plan Sea provides a framework for collaborative work and joined-up action to deliver the following aims:

- Our marine and coastal environments restored, functioning and resilient.
- Marine and coastal biodiversity loss halted and trends reversed.
- Clean, productive and biological diverse marine and coastal environments that continue to provide the ecosystem services that support and protect livelihoods, communities, health and wellbeing and the county's economy.
- The importance of our marine and coastal environment fully recognised, with good and effective management protecting these areas from damaging impacts.

3.2 Plan Sea will deliver these aims through the following objectives:

1. Work collaboratively across the county to facilitate delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities for coastal and marine habitats.
2. Coordinate and join-up efforts to support a source-to-sea approach that can effectively tackle marine and coastal pollution.
3. Make better use of management and protection mechanisms available to our Marine Protected Areas. Coordinate and join-up efforts to facilitate a holistic approach to the management of Marine Protected Areas, recognising how critical these are for marine nature recovery.

4. Lead efforts to improve ocean literacy so that all stakeholders, including the people of Kent, can make a decisive and direct contribution to the restoration of our coastal and marine environment.
5. Actively support communities and bodies in their efforts to reduce wildlife disturbance and tackle invasive non-native species.
6. Champion Kent and showcase the work of the county to highlight the challenges and achievements of the coastal county at a national level.

3.3 The draft Plan Sea document (appendix 1) expands on how Plan Sea will deliver against these six objectives.

3.4 While Plan Sea's focus is on driving environmental improvements, this work will be progressed in consideration of the socio-economic benefits a healthy coastal and marine environment will bring to the county. Integrated coastal management seeks to balance economic growth, human use and environmental protection – by employing this approach, Plan Sea will seek to support and maximise opportunities for a breadth of priorities for our coastal communities.

4. Delivery

4.1 While Plan Sea is a Kent County Council document, its delivery will be entirely dependant on partnership working. The intention is that Plan Sea provides the framework and a central point of coordination to enable this.

4.2 An annual action plan will be developed, outlining the work to be taken forward in support of the six Plan Sea objectives. This action plan will be developed with partners, recognising the important role they play in delivering Plan Sea.

4.3 Biennially, progress against these objectives will be reviewed and reported, and this will be used to inform priorities for the year ahead.

4.4 Plan Sea has a dedicated officer but funding to support its delivery will need to be secured. With diverse ambitions, this could open multiple areas of funding opportunities that need to be explored. Potential sources of funding to support Plan Sea action are discussed in the draft document (appendix 1).

5. Next steps

5.1 Over winter the draft Plan Sea will be consulted on – with key stakeholders, delivery partners and the public. Plan Sea has not be developed in isolation – its aims, objectives and potential actions have been developed in collaboration with the very partners we would be looking to for delivery. Consultation on the draft plan will be a critical step in securing their buy-in and active support.

5.2 The intent is to have Plan Sea ready for adoption in late spring 2027. The final Plan will come back to GET Cabinet Committee prior to adoption.

6. How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement

6.1 Plan Sea will align with *putting Kent residents* first by:

- Directly engage with our coastal communities in the outreach and engagement work.
- Increase opportunities to volunteer and take part in citizen science.
- Increase opportunities to experience, explore and learn about our coastal and marine environments.

6.2 Plan Sea will align with *building better communities* by:

- Improving the coastal and marine environment and recovering coastal and marine wildlife.
- Supporting economic and societal improvements in coastal towns, through environmental improvements.
- Delivery of ecosystems services, and the economic and societal benefits they underpin, as a result of clean, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environments.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Plan Sea will be delivered in partnership with marine and coastal stakeholders and delivery partners. This will be managed and coordinated by the Coastal and Marine Officer – this post is already covered by existing budget.

7.2 Projects and initiatives resulting form Plan Sea will be delivered using external funding, grants and investment. There will be no direct costs to KCC other than the Coastal and Marine Officer's time.

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are considered to be no legal implications for Kent County Council in developing and delivering Plan Sea.

9. Equalities implications

9.1 An EqIA screening has been completed and no implications were identified – a copy of the EqIA is provided in appendix 2.

10. Data Protection Implications

10.1 There are considered to be no data protection implications for Kent County Council in developing a Kent water strategy

11. Other corporate implications

11.1 There are no specific implications on other areas of KCC. However, delivering Plan Sea may require some support from other areas of KCC. There are no expectations for any additional spending.

12. Governance

12.1 Plan Sea will be delivered by the Natural Environment and Coast Team, Environment and the Circular Economy division.

13. Conclusions

13.1 Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment.

13.2 Plan Sea recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist.

13.3 Integral to Plan Sea will be continuing to build on the partnerships established during the Plan's development, working with deliver partners and stakeholders to collaboratively deliver the actions needed to bring about the Plan's aims to see:

- marine and coastal environments restored, functioning and resilient
- marine and coastal biodiversity loss halted and trends reversed
- clean, productive and biological diverse marine and coastal environments that continue to provide the ecosystem services that support and protect livelihoods, communities, health and wellbeing and the county's economy
- the importance of our marine and coastal environment fully recognised, with good and effective management protecting these areas from damaging impacts.

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14. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the paper and draft Plan Sea document and endorse the Plan to proceed to public consultation.

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15. Background Documents

Plan Sea - EqIA

16. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Plan Sea

17. Contact details

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