# Transport and Environment Committee

**10.00am, Thursday, 20 June 2019**

## Edinburgh's coastline

| | |
|---|---|
| **Executive/routine** | Executive |
| **Wards** | 1 – Almond, 4 – Forth, 13 – Leith, 14 – Craigentinny / Duddingston, 17 – Portobello / Craigmillar |
| **Council Commitments** | 13, 16, 17, 39 |

## 1.    Recommendations

1.1     It is recommended that Committee:

1.1.1   Notes the significant protection given to the built and natural heritage of Edinburgh's coastline by the Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP) and the current work ongoing by the Council to further enhance this heritage;

1.1.2   Agrees that the Council seek to deliver a continuous active travel route along Edinburgh's coastline from South Queensferry to Joppa while exploring with East Lothian Council the scope to extend this route eastward;

1.1.3   Notes the political oversight provided by the Waterfront All Party Oversight Group; and

1.1.4   Agrees to discharge the motion of 31 May 2018 by Councillor Mary Campbell.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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# Report

# Edinburgh's coastline

## 2.    Executive Summary

2.1    This report, prepared in response to a motion by Councillor Mary Campbell, sets out the role of the Council in preserving and enhancing the historic and environmental features of Edinburgh's coastline and enhancing residents' access to Edinburgh's coastline.

2.2    It also sets out the approach to enhancing the accessibility of the coastline, seeking to deliver a continuous coastal active travel route from South Queensferry to Joppa (and potentially beyond into East Lothian).

2.3    Finally, the report provides an update on development along the waterfront including the delivery of a path connecting the existing Promenade terminus at Granton beach with Granton Harbour and options for providing a crossing over the Almond that would connect South Queensferry with Cramond and the waterfront promenade with active travel routes.

## 3.    Background

3.1    Edinburgh's coastline stretches approximately 28 km along the Firth of Forth from South Queensferry to Joppa, ranging from undeveloped rural land to ageing industrial estates to densely-developed urban neighbourhoods.

3.2    On 31 May 2018, a motion by Councillor Mary Campbell was agreed by the City of Edinburgh Council. The motion (reproduced in appendix 1) noted the value of Edinburgh's coastline and called for a scoping report setting out work to date, work currently in train, and work needing to be undertaken in relation to Edinburgh's coastline.

**Built and natural heritage of Edinburgh's coastline**

*Built heritage*

3.3    Stretches of Edinburgh's coastline fall within six Conservation Areas as shown in the Edinburgh LDP: Queensferry; Cramond; Trinity; Newhaven; Leith; and Portobello. Policies *ENV 5 (Conservation Areas – Demolition of Buildings)* and *ENV 6 (Conservation Areas – Development)* of the LDP control development within

Conservation Areas, restricting the demolition of unlisted buildings and placing additional requirements on the design of new development. Each of the conservation areas has its own unique character which reflects their varied origins: as an important crossing point of the River Forth, a centre for milling, a prestigious Victorian suburb, a fishing village, a dockland, and a 19th century holiday resort. Character appraisals have been prepared for each of the Conservation Areas listed above setting out the special interest of each including the role of the coastline.

3.4 There are a great number of listed buildings along Edinburgh's coastline, with particularly large clusters at South Queensferry, Cramond, Lower Granton Road, Newhaven, and Portobello. Most of these are private homes. Listed building consent is required for the demolition of listed buildings and for any alterations that affect their historic and architectural interest. Few of the listed buildings appear on the national Buildings at Risk Register, with notable exceptions being the West Pier at Port Edgar in South Queensferry (now leased to Port Edgar Holdings Limited which is regenerating Port Edgar and who the Council is working with to identify funding to restore the West Pier) and the "Powder Store" warehouse at the Mid Pier of Granton Harbour (proposed to be comprehensively restored as part of the wider Edinburgh Marina regeneration project).

3.5 The LDP and statutory designations therefore strongly protect the built heritage of Edinburgh's coastline.

*Natural heritage*

3.6 The Firth of Forth is a designated Natura 2000 Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Habitats Regulations as it provides feeding and roosting grounds for birds. The LDP policy *ENV 13 – Sites of International Importance* stipulates that developments likely to have a "significant" impact on a Natura 2000 Special Protection Area will be permitted only where the development will not adversely affect the integrity of the area, or where there is an overriding public interest, no alternative solutions are possible, and "compensatory measures are provided to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura network is protected".

3.7 Most of Edinburgh's coastline falls within the Firth of Forth Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) designated by Scottish Natural Heritage under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as shown in appendix 2). The SSSI designation stems from the wide variety of coastal habitats which provide feeding and roosting grounds for birds along with the geology of the area. The LDP policy *ENV 14 – Sites of National Importance* stipulates that development affecting the SSSI will be permitted only where a habitat regulations appraisal has demonstrated that "the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised" or "any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance".

3.8 The LDP and statutory designations therefore strongly protect the natural heritage of Edinburgh's coastline.

**Enhancing residents' access to the coastline**

3.9     The provision of a continuous pedestrian and cyclist route from Cramond to Joppa has been a formal Council aspiration since January 2006, when the Planning Committee agreed that a safeguarded route and supporting design considerations should be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

3.10    In May 2009, the Planning Committee agreed the Edinburgh Promenade Design Code and adopted it as planning guidance. The Design Code is an extensive piece of work setting out in detail the route of a17 kilometre (km) long Promenade linking Cramond and Joppa, along with the proposed phasing of its delivery and the underlying design considerations including width, materials, and features.

3.11    The original aspiration was for the Promenade to closely follow the coastline for its full length (as shown in appendix 3). This aspiration was based on the then-expectation that maritime activities at the Port of Leith would be significantly scaled back with much of the land being released for housing-led redevelopment and opened to the public. In the aftermath of the late-2000s global economic downturn and its takeover by Arcus Infrastructure Partners in 2011, Forth Ports has revisited its plans for the Port of Leith and now intends to largely retain it as a working port. This means it would not be practical for the Promenade to follow the coastline for this section. In response to this, the Council's Planning service has identified an alternative route for the Port of Leith section of the Promenade aligned to the harbour basin. This route (shown in appendix 4) is safeguarded in the LDP. Further work is required to set the precise alignment of the route at Britannia Quay.

3.12    Since 2006, there has been significant activity aimed at encouraging greater active travel in Edinburgh and in Scotland more widely. These initiatives include the creation of the John Muir Way in 2010 which promotes active travel along Edinburgh's coastline between South Queensferry and Cramond (as shown in appendix 5). Cycling connections have been improved in the area extending the National Cycle Network. Since 2006, the Council has also taken a more active role in driving forward the regeneration of Edinburgh's waterfront, most significantly its acquisition of 66 acres of brownfield development land in Granton Waterfront in 2018. Other key developments have included the inscription of the Forth Bridge as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015. The Council's Active Travel Action Plan (first published in 2010) sets ambitious targets of 15% of all trips to work by Edinburgh residents being made by bike and 21% on foot by 2020; to help realise these targets, an active travel infrastructure improvements programme has been developed which includes city-wide improvements to walking and cycling routes.

# 4.    Main report

**Built and natural heritage of Edinburgh's coastline**

*Built heritage*

4.1     Edinburgh's coastline is included in the South East Scotland Archaeology Research Framework (SESARF) being developed with neighbouring local authorities which is expected to be completed by the end of 2019/20. The SESARF will provide a framework for future archaeological research in southeast Scotland, identifying knowledge gaps to inform research questions and promoting integrated management strategies for the area's heritage.

*Natural heritage*

4.2     First produced in 2000, the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan (EBAP) sets out a partnership approach for the conservation of Edinburgh's biodiversity. The EBAP sets a vision for Edinburgh for 2030 of having a "species-rich system of green and blue networks from the uplands of the Pentland Hills to the coastal waters of the Firth of Forth". Among the aspirations set out in the EBAP are the mitigation of climate change, the halting of invasive species, and the extension of Edinburgh's network of Local Nature Conservation Sites. Specific actions set out in the EBAP include creating/replacing tern rafts at Granton or Port Edgar for breeding sites; conserving coastal sand dunes at Cramond by controlling invasive plant species and addressing other threats such as erosion and fly-tipping; surveying high tide roosts to identify important sites and pressures on them; and improving access to the River Almond for fish. A review of the EBAP is currently underway with new areas of focus expected to include the replacement of existing "grey" infrastructure (such as hard surfaced areas and storm-water pipes) with "green" infrastructure.

4.3     'Edinburgh Shoreline' is a year-long project led by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh created to "explore and celebrate" Edinburgh's coastline that concluded in March 2019. The Council has supported the Edinburgh Shoreline project on activities such as the invasive non-native species and reestablishment of flora and appropriate vegetation along the coastline. Issues that the Edinburgh Shoreline project has examined include coastal erosion, "coastal squeeze", the creation of new rock pools, and mapping green infrastructure along the coastline. The Shoreline project has gathered information as well as being a proactive supporter of the retention of Edinburgh's shoreline. Project activities have also included the creation of an interpretive map of the shore, community murals and drone footage of the waterfront. The project also installed "artecology vertipools" on the sea defences at Cramond which turned the defences into an "living laboratory" allowing research to be carried out into the wildlife on Edinburgh's coastline. The structures are designed to encourage colonisation by marine seaweeds, barnacles, lichens and other species, and will be monitored by students from the University of Glasgow and Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh researchers.

4.4     The erosion of Edinburgh's coastline is of concern. Nationally, the erosion rate of Scottish beaches is now one metre per annum. By 2090, the mean sea level at Leith is projected to have risen by 0.3 metres; this would raise a 1:100-year flood risk to a 1:8-year flood risk. Actions that could be undertaken to address this include dredging; beach replenishment; and the creation/improvement of artificial and natural flood defences. Heavy rainfall can also contribute to coastal flooding events

via run-off into rivers and the drainage system; this could be mitigated by making Edinburgh "spongier", enabling more rainfall to be naturally absorbed and thus reducing the quantities requiring to be discharged into the River Forth.

**Enhancing residents' access to the coastline**

4.5    Since 2006, the Council has worked to deliver a Promenade between Cramond and Joppa. The development of section N to M (Silverknowes to Granton) of the Promenade was completed in 2009, while section M to L (Granton to Granton Beach) was completed in 2011. To create points of interest along the Promenade, brass rubbings trail plaques depicting local and maritime scenes have been installed to act as points of interest. A destination point has also been constructed at Granton Beach. New interpretation has been installed at the Cramond foreshore, Cramond Harbour, and Fair-a-Far Mill. No new phases of the Promenade have been delivered since 2011 due to a lack of capital funding for sections expected to be delivered by the Council coupled with private sector developments such as the Port of Leith and Western Harbour (which were expected to incorporate new sections of the Promenade) failing to proceed as envisioned.

4.6    The aspirations included in the Edinburgh Promenade Design Code very much reflect the development outlook of the time. The Design Code was written prior to the 2008-2009 recession when the regeneration of the waterfront was expected to be led by private developers.

**Granton Waterfront Regeneration**

4.7    In the aftermath of that  recession the Council has adapted its expectations and taken a more pragmatic approach to realising these ambitions, most significantly by acquiring 66 acres of brownfield land at Granton Waterfront on which to take forward a major mixed-use development. Consultation is underway with the local community and stakeholders on the wider vision for this area. This consultation will inform the production of a development framework for consideration by Planning Committee later in 2019. A key theme in the consultation is the connectivity to and from, and along, the coastline in the area.

4.8    Completion of Section L to K1 of the Promenade would link Granton Beach and Granton Harbour (as shown in appendix 6) would complete the link between Cramond and Granton Harbour. This section would entail the creation of a new path, part of it embedded in a sea wall. There is no current path onsite and the ground is overgrown, uneven, and inaccessible to walkers, runners and cyclists. At present, users must cross a road to continue their journey along the Promenade on foot and cyclists must join the road. This extension would link to National Cycle Network route 76. A funding application has been made to Sustrans to fund the initial design work.

4.9    There is an existing route for pedestrians and cyclists across the Dalmeny Estate between South Queensferry and the River Almond, albeit this does not follow the coastline for its full length, does not conform with the design specifications set out in the Design Code, and is largely not segregated from motor traffic (albeit motor

vehicle traffic within the Dalmeny Estate is limited). This route forms part of the John Muir Way and National Cycle Network (as shown in appendix 5). At present the route between South Queensferry and the River Almond does not connect with the Promenade as there are no means for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the River Almond at its mouth, obliging them to make a substantial detour to the south to the Cramond Brig. A ferry has periodically operated over the River Almond at this point and the scope for reintroducing this has been examined on several occasions. The Council's River Almond Walkway Management Plan supports the reintroduction of a ferry crossing. The Cramond and Barnton Community Council has an interest in running a ferry service. It was granted planning consent for the infrastructure for a chain ferry in 2014 but has been unable to progress this due to a lack of capital funding; the costs of delivering the chain ferry infrastructure are estimated at approximately £400,000. The scope for constructing a bridge over the River Almond at its mouth has also been considered in the past. As the River Almond is used by boats any bridge would need to either be of sufficient height to allow boats to sail beneath or be capable of opening, both of which would add significant costs. The costs of a bridge have been estimated at approximately £2.5m based on the costs of recent similar schemes elsewhere. The owner of the Dalmeny Estate is supportive in principle of the reinstatement of the chain ferry but has expressed concerns about a potential bridge link due to estate management issues.

4.10    A 4m wide shared use path running along Lower Granton Road is currently under construction and due for completion in July 2019 which will include benches, viewing platforms, and landscaping.

4.11    On 4 September 2018, the North East Locality Committee approved a recommendation from the Portobello and Craigmillar Neighbourhood Partnership that Neighbourhood Environment Programme funds should be directed towards creating a shared use link for cyclists and pedestrians across two sections of the Promenade where there is currently an interruption in this link at King's Place. Initial designs have been developed to provide this link. Council officers are in the process of finalising the detail of this after which it will be shared with Portobello Community Council and the local Spokes group to make them aware of the development. The creation of this shared use link will allow for safe passage through an area that is currently used informally as a car park. Linking these two sections of the Promenade would provide an unbroken link of approximately 3km suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.

4.12    The Council is currently working to improve active travel routes along the coastline at South Queensferry. Work in progress include proposals to create shared space on the High Street to provide improved access for pedestrians and cyclists. There are some challenges at present; for example, Newhalls Road has no current cycling infrastructure and levels of traffic make it unsuitable for promotion as a cycle route.

4.13    In March 2018, East Lothian Council completed a purchase of the site of the former Cockenzie Power Station approximately 9km along the coast from the existing terminus of the Promenade in Joppa. East Lothian Council intends to redevelop the

site for a mix of uses. An extension of the Promenade eastward could connect this new development to residents of Edinburgh and would also provide an active travel link to amenities along the coastline such as Musselburgh Racecourse and the Musselburgh Ash Lagoons birdwatching site. There may therefore be a future opportunity to extend the Promenade eastward to Cockenzie should East Lothian Council support this, ultimately creating a continuous active travel route along the coastline from South Queensferry to Cockenzie.

4.14 In addition to work by the Council, there are several developments along the safeguarded route of the Promenade where there is potential for private developers to deliver additional sections of the Promenade as part of their wider schemes:

4.14.1 *Granton Harbour*: Masterplans and associated drawings for Granton Harbour show the route of the Promenade through the site, but there has been limited progress on its implementation. The original outline planning consent for Granton Harbour (01/00802/OUT) has expired. The section 42 application to extend the timeframe of the outline planning consent for a further five years is currently being appealed to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division of the Scottish Government (PPA-230-2253). The Council is considering applications for plots within Granton Harbour on an ongoing basis and these will be assessed against the relevant LDP policies including Policy TRA 7 – Public Transport Proposals and Safeguards.

4.14.2 *Western Harbour*: A Revised Design Framework (RDF) has been approved in relation to parts of the site in Forth Ports' ownership. The RDF contains design principles and illustrative information on the Promenade along the eastern edge of the harbour area. This is linked to the existing outline permission for the wider site (planning referennce 09/00165/OUT) which expired in March 2019. An approvals of matters specified in conditions application is was submitted prior to the expiration date  for 938 units at Western Harbour (planning reference 19/00986/AMC) but this does not include sites adjacent to the water's edge. A new full application(s), predominately for housing, is expected to be submitted for the land that contains the Promenade area and the RDF will be a material consideration in the application's assessment.

4.14.3 *"Ocean Point 2"*, Waterfront Plaza: Planning permission has been granted for two office blocks on the site immediately to the west of the application site (planning reference 01/01030/FUL). One block fronts Ocean Terminal (built) and a second block fronting Ocean Drive was never built (but the consent remains live). The Council's understanding is that the developer S. Harrison now owns the plot, but development proposals are yet to come forward. Any future proposals will need to accord with LDP Policy TRA 7 – Public Transport Proposals and Safeguards and it would be expected to include a section of the Promenade to link in with the adjacent sites.

4.14.4 *"Skyliner"*, Waterfront Plaza: A planning application for residential development for 245 flats over four apartment buildings along with a commercial unit, car parking and associated landscaping (planning reference [18/00846/FUL](#)) received minded-to-grant status on 5 December 2018. The development as consented includes the provision of a Promenade along the northern boundary of the site, with a condition that it is implemented prior to the occupation of the first residential unit. Piling is already underway to reinforce the quayside. A new proposal of application notice, again for residential development, was submitted for the site in January 2019 (planning reference [19/00414/PAN](#)).

4.15 There are strategic opportunities to make better use of brownfield land along Edinburgh's coastline. The ongoing regeneration of Granton Waterfront envisages the development of a new city quarter, showcasing the best approaches to modern place-led sustainable mixed-use development, while developments on vacant land at Western Harbour and Waterfront Plaza at the Port of Leith are progressing. There is longer-term potential for brownfield land at Seafield currently dominated by retail warehouses and car showrooms to be redeveloped. These developments each have potential to improve the accessibility and amenity of the coastline. By enhancing active travel along the coastline, the Council can help unlock these strategic development opportunities.

4.16 Decisions affecting the development of the coastline cover the remits of a number of Council Committees, including Transport and Environment, Housing and Economy, Corporate Policy and Strategy, Planning, and Finance and Resources. Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee established a Waterfront All Party Oversight Group (APOG) in March 2018 to support and inform the development of strategy and provides political oversight to the development of Edinburgh's coastline.

## 5.    Next Steps

5.1 The Council will continue to deliver the various projects set out in this report. Key developments in each project will be reported to the Waterfront APOG in its capacity as the body providing political oversight for the development of Edinburgh's coastline.

5.2 If the application for Sustrans funding to design the next phase of the Edinburgh Promenade is successfula further application will be made to secure a capital funding contribution.

5.3 Options will be explored for supporting the delivery of other infrastructure to further enhance residents' access to the coastline such as a crossing over the River Almond.

5.4 Engagement with East Lothian Council will scope out the longer-term potential for an eastward extension of the Promenade to Cockenzie.

## 6. Financial impact

6.1    There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.

6.2    However, as the activities set out in the report progress, funding may be required and/or sought.

## 7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1    There are not considered to be any negative equalities impacts arising from this report. The Edinburgh Promenade Design Code takes account of the needs of users with mobility issues and therefore extending the Promenade would enhance the ability of people with mobility issues to experience Edinburgh's coastline.

7.2    Most of Edinburgh's coastline is designated as a Natura 2000 Special Protection Area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Edinburgh Local Development Plan regulates development in these areas in view of the designation.

7.3    Significant consultation with residents and other stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the work to develop the Granton Waterfront development framework. Stage 2 of the "Granton could be…" consultation exercise, which attracted 150 responses, found that the most important priorities for improving connectivity at Granton Waterfront included cycle paths (22%) and enhancing the Promenade (23%). Respondents also emphasised the importance of linking to the water which was seen as offering wide potential to users of the area. Throughout the consultation, the importance of facilitating active travel and providing improved access to the water have been recurrent themes.

7.4    Delivering the Edinburgh Promenade would promote active travel along the Edinburgh waterfront, encouraging people to walk or cycle and in turn helping reduce emissions from motor vehicles. Engagement with residents and community groups has been undertaken to inform this.

7.5    The Council will seek to deliver a continuous active travel route along the full length of Edinburgh's coastline from South Queensferry to Joppa, including completing the Edinburgh Promenade and providing connectivity across the mouth of the River Almond.

7.6    Consultation has been undertaken with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh which is leading on the Edinburgh Shoreline project.

7.7    Consultation has been undertaken with the Cramond and Barnton Community Council which has confirmed its continued interest in operating a chain ferry service across the mouth of the River Almond if the requisite infrastructure can be put in place.

## 8. Background reading/external references

8.1    Edinburgh Promenade Design Code

# 9.    Appendices

Appendix 1 – Motion from Councillor Mary Campbell

Appendix 2 – Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Edinburgh

Appendix 3 – Edinburgh Promenade: original alignment

Appendix 4 – Edinburgh Promenade: Port of Leith section revised alignment

Appendix 5 – Designated key active travel routes in Edinburgh

Appendix 6 –Edinburgh Promenade: section K1 to L proposed alignments

**Appendix 1 – Motion from Councillor Mary Campbell**

**Edinburgh's Coastline - Protecting and Enhancing our "Blue Belt"**

**Motion by Councillor Mary Campbell, 31st May 2018**

"Council:

1) "believes that as a capital city we benefit from both our historic city centre, and also our beautiful coastline. Our coastline has many highlights, from the sandy beach of Portobello, to the sea life-rich rocks in the Forth, and the stunning views from the Promenade at Cramond;

2) "notes that, as a Council we invest a lot of time and effort into our city centre, for the benefit of both residents and visitors. Council believes that a similar level of effort should also be applied to our coastline, to ensure that we are preserving and enhancing the wide variety of historic and environmental features that make our coastline so special, and to enhance residents' access to our coastline by creating a continuous active travel Promenade from Joppa to South Queensferry;

3) "notes that the Council has undertaken some work to pursue this agenda, both separately and in co-operation with partners, including production of the Edinburgh Promenade Design Code and SESTRAN studies on cross-boundary cycle development; that some off-road cycle/footpath links have been identified in the LDP but notes that that progress to deliver on this work has been a little sporadic;

4) "further notes that some Council partners including the Scottish Wildlife Trust and Royal Botanic Gardens have projects to enhance & preserve the natural heritage and biodiversity of our coastline;

5) "therefore agrees to receive a scoping report, which covers work to date, work currently in train, and the scope of work which needs to be undertaken in the future. This should report within two cycles to be brought to the Transport and Environment Committee, and should include options for political governance of the work."

**Appendix 2 – Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Edinburgh**

**Appendix 3 – Edinburgh Promenade: original alignment**



KEY

| | |
|---|---|
| Phase 1 | 2008-2012 |
| Phase 2 | 2013-2017 |
| Phase 3 | 2018-2027 |
| Phase 4 | 2028-2037 |
| Nodes | |

**Appendix 4 – Edinburgh Promenade: Port of Leith section revised alignment**

**Appendix 5 – Designated key active travel routes in Edinburgh**



Legend:
- Promenade
- John Muir Way
- National Cycle Network
- John Muir Way and National Cycle Network
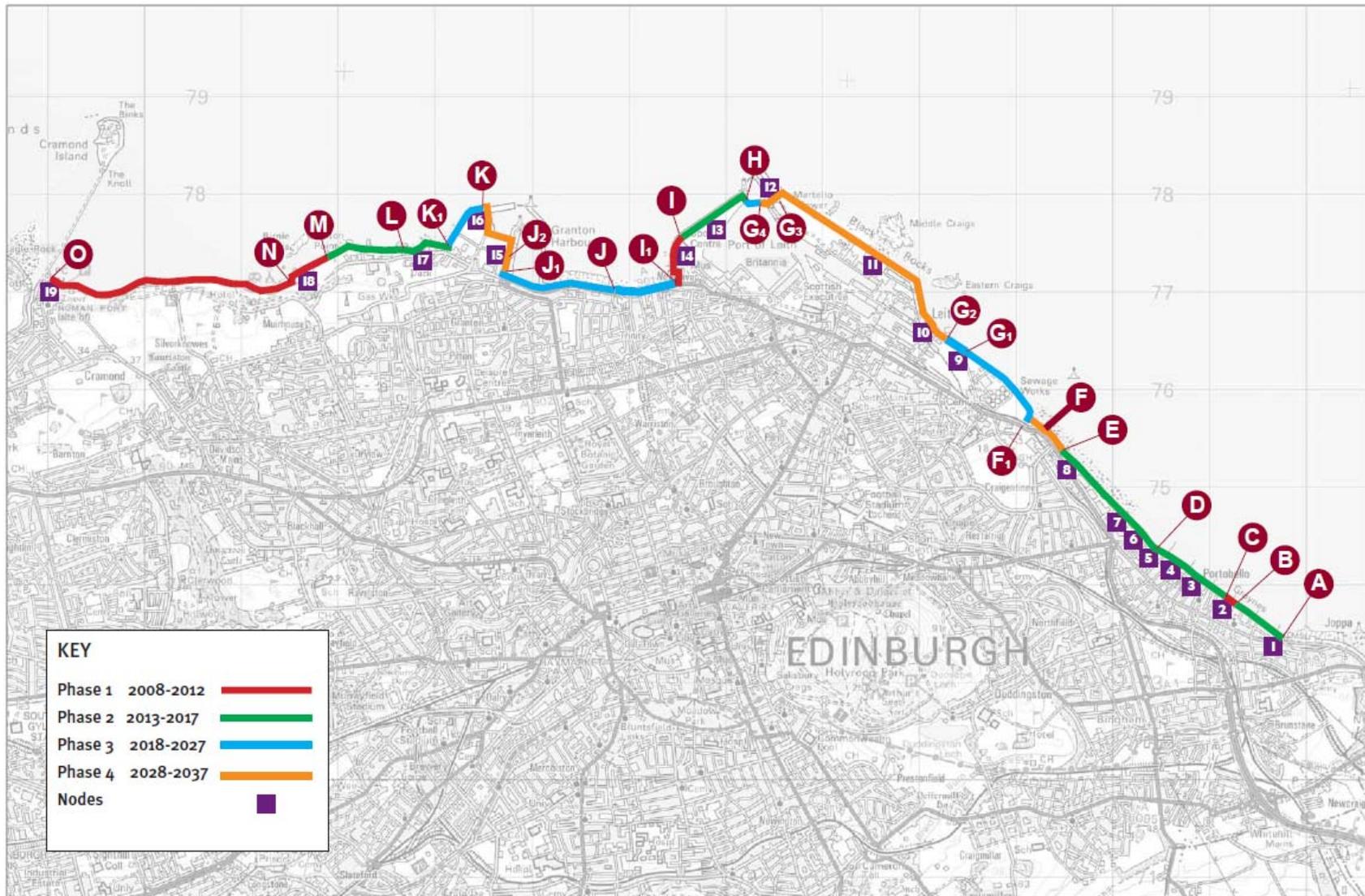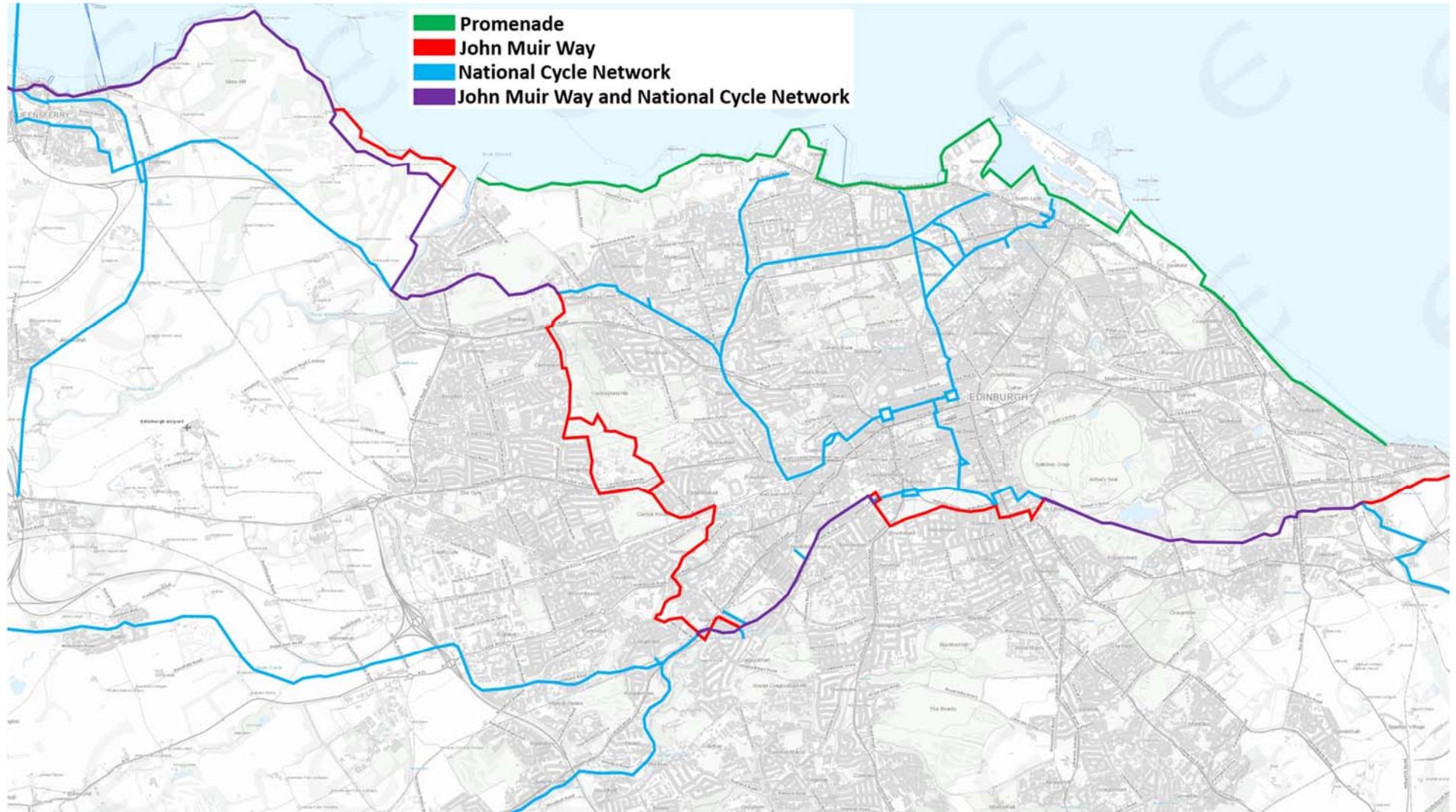
**Appendix 6 – Edinburgh Promenade: section K1 to L proposed alignments**

Location
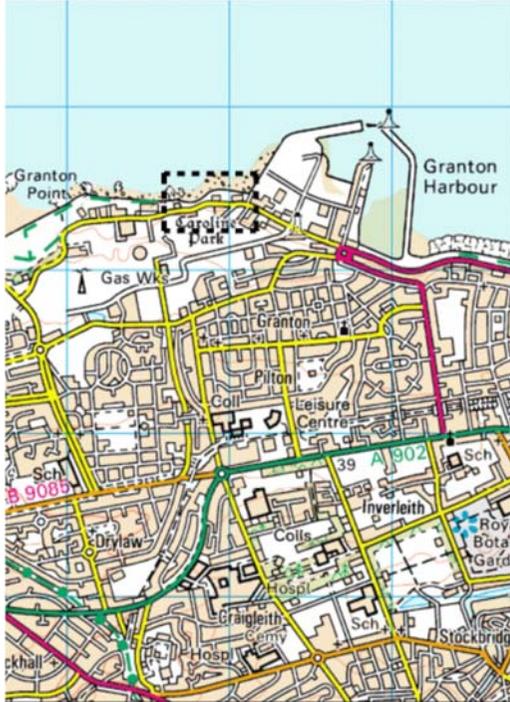
Route option 1

Route option 2