The CobbNet Project
Written by Jules Procter. January 2026.

At the end of November 2025, I attended the "Stabilising the Cobb" public consultation, about the proposed repairs to The Cobb at Lyme Regis. It was put on by a number of the stakeholders, including Dorset Coast Forum, and proposed two approaches to fixing the damage to this Grade 1 structure, known world-wide, and key to providing coastal defences as well as a safe harbour at Lyme. Their measured approach, to implement a solution which would be good for 100 years, is commendable, and they will probably succeed in getting something in place in the coming years. For myself, I had already taken a step back, and thought "What if we captured some of that destructive wave and water energy before it even reaches The Cobb?"

So, the idea of "The CobbNet Project" came about.
This would be a marine eco-tech project with the aim of providing solutions to capture a (small) proportion of the energy in the sea water and turn it into electricity. It would need to be made up of a consortium of interests, to include, marine biologists, marine engineers, eco-tech startups, investors, project managers, communicators, and a documentation team.

Drawn from Universities and from industry, this would an ongoing, multi-million pound project, allowing approved research and development on how to capture energy from the water, without jeopardizing the marine ecosystem. This R&D would run alongside proven technology, to allow the project to be beneficial from an early stage. Information would be shared across the group, by the documentation team, and non-commercially sensitive project details to the public, by the communications team. Oversight would be by a steering group, with all the stakeholders represented.

Using Lyme Regis as a base, this would come up with viable solutions, not only to give additional protection to The Cobb, but which could be implemented, in a timely fashion, across the rest of the World Heritage Jurassic Coast, and beyond.

This gives The CobbNet Project the opportunity for a number of income streams, to sell the electricity generated, to licence the intellectual property generated, to sell or lease the solutions developed, and possibly merchandise and media income. It is important that the project is financially viable, in the medium to long term, to allow investors to have confidence on a sensible return.

This a bound by the fact that CobbNet would be an ecological project, as much as a technological one.
While grants from government sources would be welcome, the speed at which funds become available is important. We are tackling a climate emergency, and can't afford to get bogged down by bureaucracy and dithering, often a feature of politicians.

The research areas encouraged by the project, would help build a knowledge and skills base, as well as an economic understanding of what is required to mitigate the effects of increasingly violent storms, and the resulting damage to the environment.

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As the systems deployed on, and under, the sea would require no go areas for fishing and unauthorised boats, so creating a marine sanctuary, to benefit the marine life. Over time, the size of these areas could be quite substantial, as appropriate systems are installed, maybe kilometres across. Together with less turbulent waters, these areas should allow a less unstable environment.

There would need to be a number of pontoons to provide a number of features. Location for offshore laboratories, accommodation for scientists, engineers and maintenance teams, and a docking area for boats and barges. The electricity generated would be captured in battery systems located in 20 foot shipping containers, sited on barges. Once full, or at scheduled times the barges would be towed to suitable ports, to be craned onto lorries to be distributed to customers. Depleted battery systems would then be towed back out to a pontoon to be recharged. The use of containers allow a faster implementation, rather than relying on a cable to the shore, and which would provide electricity where it may be needed.

The customers for the containerised battery systems could be electric vehicle charging locations, small industrial units, farm shops, community centres, festivals and sports grounds, anywhere electricity is needed. The visibility of the containers would be part of the communication to the public about the project. The income from selling this electricity would be a useful source of funds, as well as benefiting the customers from being independent of the national grid. (Especially during stormy times, when power lines might be disrupted.)

The CobbNet project would have a number of benefits, helping to protect the coastline, providing an offshore marine haven, supporting local businesses and communities, and an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge for scientists and engineers. Systems could be designed and implemented relatively quickly, so enabling a suitable response to some of the effects of climate change.

The drawbacks, and challenges, are, how to get the required skill sets to work together; where to get the funding from; keeping project as an eco-tech project, not just a tech project; have we started too late?

The CobbNet project could be a major change in how we view our environment, and an opportunity, not only to help protect our marine and coastal environment, but also to communicate the issues and responses to the public.

Further reading :-

Dorset Coast Forum :- www.dorsetcoast.com
Jules Procter website :- www.banburyshire.net