

Report of the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group

5.1 National Network of Coastal Monitoring programmes

This report is to inform Elected Members on progress for the development of the Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme into the National Network of Regional Monitoring Programmes. The existing DEFRA grant aid funded Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme has been in operation since the financial year 2002/03. Funding continues until March 2012.

Following technical approvals for a five year programme commencing in April 2012, the financial and administrative approvals process has now been completed. Approvals have been now been received for the scheme.

The coordinated approach to procurement has been undertaken nationally for contracted programme elements; this is being coordinated by Steve Cook from New Forest District Council. A number of frameworks are now in place with several contracting organisations qualified for each work category. The contract for wave and tidal measurement has been let. The southeast sector is well on schedule for commencement in 2012.

Although the approval has been provided for the full sum requested in the scheme application, the sanctioned list shown within the medium term plan makes provision for a reduction of some 23%. Following discussions with the EA finance team it is clear that the approval remains for the full sum, although the sanctioned list provides some ambiguity which remains unexplained.

Discussions with Natural England are on-going and potential opportunities for further savings are being explored, related to aerial surveys and ecological mapping. Joint working with the MCA to deliver bathymetric surveys continues to provide excellent value

Recommendation: For information

5.2 Grant aid funding for research studies

One of the key objectives of the SCOPAC funded research programme is to optimise expenditure and to focus on projects which might potentially lead to much larger scale investments at a national scale, and which may also provide significant regional benefits. Whilst national funding for regional projects has not previously been achieved through the DEFRA / EA FDGIA process, two recent applications to attract funding through this route have been successful.

The successful scheme applications have been highlighted as regional requirements through the Shoreline Management Plan action plans and these have featured as targets in several action plans on a region-wide basis. Applications, which must be made by coastal operating

authorities, have been made by New Forest District Council on behalf of the whole of the regional community. Both projects are linked directly with previous small scale SCOPAC funded projects.

Two projects have been approved within the medium term plan (MTP) for commencement in 2012. The first is for an update of the sediment transport study, which is widely used within the region. The original SCOPAC study was carried out a number of years ago and is probably the most extensively used of all the SCOPAC research projects. This study will be funded over a three year period and its outputs are expected to aid the development of future strategic coastal plans. Funding of £150,000 has been secured for this study.

The findings of a SCOPAC funded preliminary study on extreme wave conditions within the English Channel has highlighted serious risks of flooding which are not generally taken into account in the design process. This study will be supported by a new project entitled "Reducing regional flood and erosion risk from wave action on the Channel Coast". It is anticipated that this project will comprise a combination of assessments of field data, and will be supported by physical model testing. A number of key sites, which have previously been subject to problems, will be examined on a site specific basis; these include Chesil Beach, Hayling Island and Hurst Spit. The intention is that a new method for definition of design conditions for wave overtopping and breaching will be produced. A series of design conditions will be produced, which will enable the standards of service at many sites to be reassessed. It is anticipated that defences will subsequently require some improvements at a number of locations, in order to maintain the required standard of service. This study will take place over period of two years at an estimated cost of £230,000. It is likely that opportunities will arise for members and officers to visit the model testing facility to view progress of the project.

Recommendation: For information

5.3 Funding from EA Wessex

The Environment Agency Wessex has seen considerable benefits arising from the SCOPAC research programme over many years and has secured £30,000 funding to be spread over three years, as a contribution to the research programme. The expectations are that this funding will be used in support of activities that will also be of direct benefit to the EA. In order to release this funding it will be necessary to develop a 3 year contract agreement, which will need to be formed with Havant Borough Council, which acts as SCOPAC's legal parent body.

Recommendation: For information

5.4 Membership subscriptions

SCOPAC currently operates a two tier membership system, which has been in place for many years. The origins of this structure are uncertain but it is thought that the original intention was that all coastal operating authorities would be full members, whilst other

interested organisations could also benefit from associate memberships at a lower rate. Over the years membership status of some organisations has altered, although the reasons for this are not generally documented.

Subscription income totals approximately £51,000 per year, of which £29,500 is allocated to administrative activities, for management and operation of both SCOPAC and the Southern Coastal Group. Administrative costs have risen significantly during the past 5 years as a result of the differing expectations of the coastal groups, arising primarily from the Environment Agency strategic overview, and the role of coastal groups within this structure. No contribution is made towards the operational running of the coastal group, although demands on officer time are significantly higher than they have been historically.

A contribution towards time and expense costs of the Southern Coastal Group Chairman to attend Environment agency strategic initiatives, arising from its strategic overview of the coast is met directly by the Environment Agency on the basis of timesheet evidence for a limited range of specified activities. This amounts to approx. £20k per year and there is no net cost to SCOPAC for these activities; this cost is in addition to the basic administration provided in running the coastal groups.

This leaves an annual balance of just £21,500 for the research programme. This is supplemented from time to time by windfall receipts from a variety of sources, but these do not generally exceed £10k per year and are generally much lower. SCOPAC is unique as a coastal group in undertaking small scale research programmes as part of its activities and this is funded primarily by subscriptions from full members. The annual reports have demonstrated massive savings to partners through contribution to these programmes and recent successes with bidding for grant aid funding provide further support for this approach. A reduction in contributions to this budget element would result in a significant reduction in leverage of external funding.

The actual cost for providing the basic administrative operation of SCOPAC and the Southern Coastal Group is estimated at about £1200 per year, per member authority (including all associate members). Associate members are currently charged just £436 per year and are therefore heavily subsidised by full members. The cost of full membership including contributions to the research programme is currently £3488 per year. The contribution towards the research programme is heavily eroded because of the subsidy to associate member's administrative costs. A significant proportion of the funding originally intended to support research programmes is now spent on coastal group administration.

There is a need to achieve a more equitable financial balance between membership tiers and this could be achieved in a number of ways. As an interim measure, it is suggested that incremental changes are made to the charging structure for associate operating authority members, gradually bringing their contribution up to the same level as the administrative pro rata costs over the course of 4 years. Ultimately the aim must be for all operating authorities and lead local flood authorities to move to a single membership level, with associate member status being available only to other interested organisations, without coast protection or flood defence powers, and the approach to achieve this will be addressed by the Southern Coastal Group.

It is clear that many of the associate members currently take advantage of some aspects of membership which they are not contributing towards. As an interim measure it is suggested that this balance is redressed immediately through reassessment of membership entitlements. It is recommended that modifications are made to membership status and entitlements from April 2012.

Full members will be entitled to

- Basic administration
- Attendance at coastal group meetings
- All research outputs
- Membership of research subgroup
- Focused research with case studies at full member sites, where appropriate.
- Opportunity to bid for local projects funding (budget £4000 per year)
- Free attendance for members and officers at all workshops, training events and field trips

Associate members will be entitled to

- Basic administration
- Attendance at coastal group meetings
- Attendance at workshops, training events and field trips at an additional cost of £100 per person per event
- Access to research outputs at a proportional cost of the research

Mailing list members

- Receive copies of coastal group agendas and minutes
- Attendance at workshops, training events and field trips at an additional cost per person per event to be determined on an event by event basis.

It is suggested also that contractors and consultants are invited to sponsor training events and workshops, with a view to making some of these events self-financing. This approach has already been successful, with five consultants supporting the recent ACCESS launch event.

Recommendation: That modifications to the membership charging structure are made as outlined above. For decision

5.5 Budget 2012/13

The proposed budget for 2012/13 is presented in Paper D.

Recommendation: For decision. That the draft budget for SCOPAC presented in Paper D be approved and the draft budget for Southern Coastal Group be noted.

5.6 Member and Officer Events: 2012 Summer Field visit

Following discussion by the Southern Coastal Group it is suggested that Hurst Spit (New Forest District Council) should provide the location for the summer 2012 SCOPAC field visit. The visit will include the opportunity to view a wide variety of coastal management topics such as the beach management scheme, designated inter-tidal and vegetated shingle habitats, offshore Shingles Bank (used for sediment recycling) and saltmarsh management projects within the Western Solent.

The field visit will take place in June and will involve a ferry trip along the Keyhaven River to Hurst Castle and lunch at the Castle. The maximum estimated cost of the trip is £1200 for up to 60 people.

It is suggested that Cllr Penfold's suggestion of a trip to Dorset might be a good location for the summer 2013 visit when the Lyme Regis coastal protection scheme is underway.

Recommendation: For decision. That funding of £1200 be approved for the summer field visit to Hurst Spit.