

Report to standing conference on problems associated with the coastline

Date: 11 December 2009

Report of the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group

3.1 Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring programme: Phase 3, 2011/2016

(Appendix 1)

The current national situation comprises an unrelated network of programmes that provides some coverage of all regions of the country with a basic regional coastal monitoring programme. A series of meetings have been held to consider the possibility of establishment of a coordinated national approach to coastal monitoring, which it is hoped will commence in 2011. The proposed network has been based on the model developed for the southeast and southwest programme and consultation drafts identifying issues to be considered in formulation of the programme were posted onto the CCO website at the end of September. Monitoring undertaken in the SCOPAC region is likely to remain largely the same under the proposed approach.

The regional programme currently provides all of the operating authorities with a valuable resource and is widely regarded as a programme of best practice. The basis of the proposed programme composition and programme development was also discussed at the recent successful annual partners meeting held at Worthing; this event was sponsored by SCOPAC.

Funding for the development of the integrated programme has now been agreed by Environment Agency's National Review Group. The new network will also provide data on key national issues in a coordinated format and this too will be coordinated within the SCOPAC region.

A steering group has been established and the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group (SCG) has been preparing a coordinated application on behalf of all coastal groups for the first phase of this national framework. A draft submission will be prepared prior to Christmas 2009 and a letter asking all Operating Authorities to sign up will be circulated.

The project board are currently working on a Governance model for the national programme. The administrative structure is likely to be far more complex than previously and the approvals process has caused some significant concerns and delays to the commencement of the programme design. The project board is concerned with the administrative development of this important project.

A national workshop was held on the 1st October 2009 to explore the potential framework for the programme. Attendees included existing and proposed regional programme leads, representatives from the EA and NE, plus members of the NRG.

Each of the operating authorities within the region will be asked to sign a letter of agreement to the programme components. They will also be asked to provide their agreement that New Forest District Council will continue to act as the lead authority for the purposes of administration of the project. There are no financial implications for the partners, as the whole of the project is expected to be funded through EA

administered DEFRA grant aid. Letters of support will also be provided by each of the coastal groups and it is proposed that SCOPAC should also endorse the proposal

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal for a coordinated application for funding of the SCOPAC / Southern coastal group region of the network of regional coastal monitoring programmes to be made by New Forest District Council on behalf of the Coastal Group.

3.2 Proposal for new training initiatives (Appendix 2)

Basic training and understanding of real management issues is a key issue for both officers and members and the regular turnover of both results in a constant need for updating knowledge and skills. It is evident that knowledge is often not passed on to the next generation and the proposed initiative seeks to partially remedy this problem. Two new training initiatives are proposed to provide development opportunities for both officers and members.

The focus of SCOPAC has recently been on development of new policy issues and this has been appropriate since these issues have been high on the national agenda. More local operational and practical issues have consequently been addressed in less detail.

Regular strategic reviews have highlighted the need for skills development and have identified a skills shortage within operating authorities. Participation in the SCOPAC meetings has tended to focus more on senior staff and limited opportunity has previously been provided for inexperienced or recently qualified staff to participate. In considering these issues it is proposed that a new series of workshops are introduced (Paper E) which will provide the opportunity to share practical skills and to involve both experienced officers and also those that have recently started work in shoreline management. The workshop series will be known as the "problem shared" workshops.

Maintenance of coastal systems is a complex subject and yet there is little well documented detailing of current practice in technical manuals. There is currently a wide range of experience within the SCOPAC membership and it is important that this knowledge is passed on. It is proposed that the first two workshops will focus on maintenance issues. The first workshop will be on maintenance of timber groynes and the second will be on beach recycling.

In order to make best use of Coastal Group funds, the workshops will be low cost events using facilities that are available at no cost and with a modest budget required to provide light refreshments. It is the intention that the half day workshops will be free to SCOPAC members. It is hoped that this approach will also attract significant participation.

The outputs from the workshops will also be summarised and published on the SCOPAC website. It is suggested that the workshops for officers are funded from within the existing local projects budget, using officer's delegated powers. These events will be conducted during the winter months and will be held at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton. It is anticipated that two events per year will be held.

The second linked initiative will focus on dealing with practical problems at local sites. Historically, SCOPAC has successfully promoted a series of field visits. These have typically been held over a period of one or two full days. Attendance at these events has not been high, perhaps because of the time constraints and costs. The proposed approach will introduce events which require only a half day commitment. The real value is in seeing and understanding real problems and sharing in the knowledge of approaches to dealing with the problem. The proposed approach will focus on a field visit to a single site on each occasion; these will again be low cost events with minimal provision for light refreshments.

Each field visit will focus on a single site. Appropriate officers, conservation agencies and experts will present their view of a particular problem and discuss the practical techniques used to overcome the problems. The field visits will be held during the summer months and will include a short presentation of the problems and the approaches being used to provide practical solutions and implement the policy.

A series of sites are currently being considered and suggestions for locations are encouraged.

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal for development of new officer and member training initiatives

3.3 SCOPAC meeting participation by members

SCOPAC is constantly seeking to improve the level of participation of both officers and members within discussions. Many of the issues discussed are related to national policy issues, which may have local significance, but which may seem difficult to place in local context. The opportunity to discuss resolution of local issues has been limited however.

It is suggested that a new standing item is introduced to the SCOPAC agenda which will involve a short (5 minute) presentation of a local issue of concern, to be provided jointly by a member and officer. Discussion of difficult issues related to implementation of policy is encouraged. For example, funding, conservation, implications of policy change, access or amenity issues may all provide suitable topics. It is hoped that discussion of such real problems will crystallize the understanding of the implications of policy when implemented at a local level.

It is suggested that such an approach be adopted for a trial period and that one issue be presented for discussion at each SCOPAC meeting. Volunteers for this initiative are welcomed.

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal to introduce the local issues presentation by members and officers for a trial period.

3.4 SMP progress (Appendix 3.1 and 3.2)

The Poole and Christchurch Bays SMP has just reached the consultation stage. Details of the consultation documents and availability are shown in Paper F1. The North Solent plan is due to go to consultation in January. There are currently some doubts over the timing of the finalisation of these two plans; these are related to the

timing of the general election next year and the context with approvals through the democratic process. The projected timetables are highlighted in Paper F2.

Recent progress has been made on the Isle of Wight SMP with appointment of a consultant to assist with delivery.

Report for information

3.5 Coordination of Medium Term Plan (Appendix 4)

One of the tasks assigned to the EA in their strategic overview of the coast is monitoring and coordination of the medium term plan (MTP) which provides confirmation and monitoring of indicative funding for capital investments for all operating authorities over the next 5 years. This has recently been introduced as a regular detailed item for discussion at the Southern Coastal Group.

The medium term plan has also been discussed recently by the Coastal Chairmen. The key messages were that the need for more works is being identified through SMPs, and the need to make spending go further is also being identified through the Long Term Investment Strategy. We therefore need to work much more closely together and be much more realistic in our planning to make sure that we only plan what is reasonable and can deliver what we plan.

Discussions have covered a number of points:

- Options for bids coming through Coastal Groups can give better assurance of joined up planning and commitment, and allow consideration of what can be delivered in house with similar projects and procurement streamlining. Coastal Groups have an opportunity to better input to the MTP process to improve it.
- Funding flexibility – LA underspend can be absorbed back into the Agency if it will not be spent in time, but is there the same flexibility if LAs need more funding before the end of the year?
- Centres of excellence can help join things up, be secure in expectation of continued staff funding, provide flexibility of approach and assist in with procurement streamlining. They can also help better explore the use of hybrid schemes. There may be some issues in their establishment.
- Clear understanding of how long projects take is needed so that bids are more realistic within given timeframes.
- EA discussion with individual LAs on MTPs may be helpful to those LAs in the short term but may restrict the opportunities for sharing best practice.
- Reassurance is needed from the EA about what we're spending money on and that 'back office' costs don't take disproportionate amounts of funding.

Guidance is to be prepared by the EA which sets out how long different things take to help LAs make realistic plans and submit them at the right time in order to give better understanding of time frames and ensure spend comes out of the right year.

In December RFDC / CG chairs will have better understanding of what the allocation is.

Report for information

3.6 Flood and Water Management Act

The Flood and Water Management Bill has been introduced into Parliament. The Act will provide better, more sustainable management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses, help safeguard community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges and protect water supplies to the consumer. A copy of the Act and Explanatory Notes as well as factsheets explaining the implications of the provisions contained within the Act are available from the [Defra website](#).

The Government's response to the public consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny on the draft Act has been published. This document is also available from the [Defra website](#). The summary of responses to the consultation will be published shortly.

Report for information

3.7 The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009)

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) introduces a marine planning system in UK waters for the first time. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will have responsibility for preparing marine plans in the English inshore and offshore marine regions. Before the MMO can begin planning the Government needs to identify the appropriate boundaries to divide the regions into plan areas.

A consultation invites views on a series of proposed plan areas within the English Inshore and English Offshore areas, and for the considerations which is proposed that the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) take into account when deciding the order in which they develop marine plans for each area.

The consultation document, accompanying Impact Assessment, and an Interactive pdf are available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/marine-plan/index.htm>

In essence the boundaries for the Inshore Marine Plans have been chosen to match the Coastal Group boundaries. The proposal recognises both the Coastal Group and the SMP's as important to the Marine Plans. It is suggested that a response be prepared on behalf of the coastal group to the Defra Consultation.

Report for information

3.8 Funding arrangements for coastal groups

At the 15 September meeting of SCOPAC the former Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group outlined a business case for financial support for the coastal groups, which has been submitted to the EA for consideration. An agreement by the EA was expected by the end of September.

The funding issue was discussed at the October 8th meeting of the Coastal Chairs. The issue of funding for the coastal groups has been considered by the EA with reference to a previously circulated list of suggested activities and time estimates. It is proposed that activities be grouped into 3 categories.

- strategic activities, looking nationally and drawing on Coastal Group chairs or their nominated representatives to inform and influence policy and decision making;
- tactical activities, largely taking place within each Coastal Group boundary; and

- operational, relating to LA activity and not actions for Coastal Groups or the EA.

The idea of the funding from the EA is to cover Coastal Group activities that are strategic.

Discussion points included:

- The need for agreement on which activities fall into which category. Chairmanship of the Coastal Group in itself is considered by the EA to be tactical.
- The number of days required for each activity may also need some clarity and agreement, but they may be highly variable. There is recognition that different amounts of time may be claimed for.
- A request to add in a line for LA liaison to cover activities such as attending SMP meetings and Defra meetings.
- Comparison with the role of RFDC chairs, the calculations and time commitment estimates for their role and the fact that they are salaried.
- Recognition that Coastal Groups have been running for 15 years without any funding at all and have succeeded on goodwill, but we now have an opportunity to try and redress the balance.
- The amount currently planned may be viewed as insufficient but without evidence of what more is required, no case can be put forward to increases.
- A different mechanism may be required for Coastal Group chairs who are not funded through local authorities.
- Some flexibility and discretion may be possible, so long as actions can be clearly justified.
- The Chair of Coastal Group chairs may be justified in having a greater allowance which he can then share around the other groups as he delegates and deputises activities.

The agreed action was that Coastal Groups should start to make claims, although no clear mechanism has been defined for this. Some of the claims will inevitably be challenged and will no doubt prove to be justified. Lessons learned from this process will help inform future arrangements. Claims should be made quarterly.

A draft invoice has already been prepared and submitted (October 14th) for consideration by the former Chairman of the Coastal Group; this is based on the first six months of this year. A response from the EA has not yet been received. A reminder has also been submitted. A list of activities undertaken in the last six months and submitted for this purpose is tabled below.

- Representation on national research and policy-making bodies - Defra/Scott-Wilson Community Adaptation Study - 1 day (7th April).
- -SMP2 and MTP Co-ordination activities within Group to assist successful implementation of EASO - 4 days (6th, 14th, 20th, 23rd April).
- Coastal Erosion risk mapping support/awareness-raising amongst Group - 2 days (5th, 15th May).
- Implementation of new arrangements to separate SCOPAC activities from Southern Coastal Group to meet Defra/EASO requirements - 4 days (18th, 19th May, 10th, 12th June).
- Response to national consultations on behalf of Coastal Groups in liaison with EA including

- Floods & Water Bill - 1 day (9th July) and Consultation on Coastal Change - 2 days (20th & 28th August).
- Attendance at EA/Coastal Chairman Workshop, Telford - 1 day (29th June).
- Attendance at EA Coastal Forum - 1 day (7th July).
- Defra Engagement Manager/Southern CG Meeting on CERM rollout - 1 day (5th August).
- EA Coastal Engagement Governance meeting - 1 day (29th July).
- Develop, refine and share models for Coastal Groups Constitutions, Terms of Reference, Annual Reports and Business Plans and example website contents - 4 days (9th, 15th, 17th April, 21st May).
- Attendance at RFDC Meetings - Preparation 0.5 day, meeting - 1 day (14th/15th July).

The total value of the sum claimed for this period is £9,257.50, which is broadly in line with earlier expectations for this period..

Report for information

Papers for information (Appendix 5)

1. The recent meeting of the Southern Coastal Group was attended by Carol Ward of GOSE, who presented discussions on the current GOSE initiatives related to the coast. A copy of the presentation is included for information

Report by Professor Andrew Bradbury, Chairman of Southern Coastal Group