

Report to Standing Conference On Problems Associated with the Coastline

Date: 12 March 2010

Report of the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group

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

The current phase of regional coastal programme currently provides all of the operating authorities with a valuable resource and is widely regarded as a programme of best practice. Funding will conclude in 2012. The next phase will include 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 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.

Following endorsement by SCOPAC, each of the operating authorities within the region has now been asked to sign a letter of agreement to the programme components. They are 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 response are anticipated by early March.

It is anticipated that the completed application for funding will be presented to the Environment Agency's National Review Group for consideration during March. This is expected to be considered during May 2010 and with a decision later in the summer.

Recommendation: For Information

3.2 Proposal for site visit to Hengistbury Head

Following outline agreement by SCOPAC members to explore the introduction of short local field visits for both members and officers, the first proposed field visit will take place at Hengistbury Head, Dorset.

This will be a half day visit and will provide participants with an opportunity to explore a range of coastal problems and the way that these are being dealt with at both local and regional strategic levels.

The following key issues will be explored during the course of the field visit.

- The strategic role of Hengistbury Head in the management of Poole and Christchurch Bays, as discussed in the shoreline management plan.

- Local coast protection management issues at Bournemouth, including beach recharge schemes and the Boscombe surf reef.
- Local coast protection management of the Mudeford Sandbank and implications to Christchurch Harbour
- Risks of potential breach formation in the Double Dykes area and the significance of cooperation across administrative boundaries and between the EA and Local Authorities.
- Applications of the regional coastal monitoring programme to beach management.
- Interaction of coastal erosion and flooding problems with nature conservation and archaeological issues.

A preliminary date of Tuesday 15th June 2010 is suggested for the field visit. The visit will take place during the morning and will conclude with lunch.

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 visit will be supported by local officers from Bournemouth BC, Christchurch DC, New Forest DC and the Channel Coastal Observatory. The real value is in seeing and understanding real problems and sharing in the knowledge of approaches to dealing with the problem.

The visit will commence with coffee and tea will conclude with a light lunch. The estimated cost of the visit to be funded by SCOPAC is £1200 to cover the costs of catering and venue. Participants will be required to meet at Hengistbury Head and no transport will be provided by SCOPAC. The field visit will involve all participants walking in excess of one mile. An abbreviated visit may be possible for those with walking difficulties. Numbers will be limited.

Further site visits are under consideration. A series of sites are currently being considered and suggestions for locations are encouraged.

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal for a field visit to Hengistbury Head on June 15th 2010 and for expenditure of up-to £1200 for catering and venue costs.

3.3 Funding arrangements for coastal groups

At the December 2009 meeting of SCOPAC, the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group outlined a business model for financial support for the coastal groups, which has been proposed by the EA for consideration by the coastal group chairmen. Agreement to the approach presented at the last meeting has been provided by the EA.

The EA have agreed to fund officer-Chairman time, on the basis of submitted timesheets provided by the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group, through Havant BC. They have agreed to pay costs for Chairman's time conducted specifically for strategic EA activities supported by timesheets.

The positive aspect to this approach is that this is financially equitable and will provide proper recompense for staff time. SCOPAC will receive reimbursement for all activities conducted by the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group on behalf of the EA. This provides flexibility in the event that demands for Chairman's time are higher than expected or if related to a fixed budget.

It was originally hoped that an annual coastal group allocation could be made by the EA, but they have been unable to find a method of making such funding available that is compliant with their standing orders procedures. Such an approach would assist with the SCOPAC budgetary process and clear knowledge of income but this block allocation does not currently appear to be an option.

An invoice has been submitted for the first six months of the year, which is broadly in line with original SCOPAC budget estimates. It is understood that this submission is currently being processed by the EA and that funding should be received shortly.

Funding will not be available for time spent on tactical activities, ie those largely taking place within each Coastal Group boundary; nor operational activities, relating to LA activity and not actions for Coastal Groups or the EA.

Since the funding will be based on actual time charged, the budget will necessarily vary from year to year. Indications are that the original budgetary estimate made by officers, of about £20,000 per year is about right. Many of the activities are repeatable and predictable and costs easily estimated. The financial implication of this approach places SCOPAC and the Southern Coastal Group in a comparable and equitable financial position to that prior to the introduction of the EA strategic overview, since those administrative costs that result directly from the EA strategic overview will be covered. The key intention of this funding was to ensure that the SCOPAC research budget would not be eroded by administrative activities required by the EA and this appears to be successful.

It is anticipated that this arrangement will enable more secure planning of future research expenditure, without the possibility of this funding being required for administrative activities required to subsidise EA activities.

Report for information

3.4 Budget for 2010/11

(see Paper D)

Expenditure planning has been difficult during the past 12 months because of the lack of certainty of income related to potential funding of staff time costs for the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group on EA strategic overview related activities. A cautious approach to commitment of research expenditure has been adopted because of this uncertainty; this has ensured that SCOPAC has not become overcommitted in the event that the anticipated EA funding was not forthcoming. Since the income for financial year 2009/2010 has only just been resolved, current budget for the year has not been fully committed. The implication of this uncertainty is that there will be a requirement to roll some expenditure forward to the next financial year.

The implication of the under expenditure on project delivery for the current financial year is minimal, since the two key research projects planned to be commenced in 2009/2010 are scheduled to be completed in 2010/2011; this remains the case and the expenditure should phase correctly by the end of 2010/11.

The key expenditure item relates to the research budget. It should be noted that research expenditure has been variable over the past few years, primarily because of the strategic decision of SCOPAC to plan for longer term research expenditure, and for allowance of larger scale research programmes that will bridge more than one financial year. This variable expenditure profile has been advantageous. One of the key benefits of rolling funding forward has been the ability to fund larger scale and more worthwhile research projects. These have historically provided the membership with tremendous value for money and have allowed regional issues to be investigated that would otherwise be ignored by national programmes, but would be too large to complete within the budget of a single financial year. The typical budget available for research is about £20-25k per year, which provides limited opportunity.

Allocations for a prioritised research budget for several years have already been agreed by SCOPAC, at its meeting on 15th February 2008, Item 28 (ii), following completion of the 'Research Review'. This programme is subject to satisfactory income being available from the research budget and is fairly optimistic.

The outline budget for expenditure of research for the next financial year 2010/11 has already been agreed by SCOPAC, subject to availability of funding. The attached budget summary (Paper D) sets out the proposed expenditure profile for the year 2010/11.

Projected administration costs are about 15% lower than the budget for previous years. Prudent planning of activities, such as field visits, has also provided a significant saving. Projected research funding of about £45k is comparable with the current financial year, but this is expected to fall to about £22k in future years (2011/12), in line with anticipated income.

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the budget profile for financial year 2010/11 (given in paper D).

3.5 Induction for members

At the December 11 2009 meeting of SCOPAC members requested an induction process to assist new elected members with their introduction to SCOPAC. This request has been addressed through subsequent officer discussion at the Southern Coastal Group and a series of recommendations provided.

It is considered that the responsibility for informing members of general coastal matters and the role of the individual operating authority in coastal risk management matters is initially the responsibility of individual officers of the partner authorities. There is an expectation that local briefings will be conducted by officers prior to initial attendance by members at SCOPAC. These should include a brief overview of the workings and role of members within SCOPAC.

In order to assist with this process and to provide more detail on the background and programme for SCOPAC, an induction pack will be produced. When a new elected member representative has been registered with SCOPAC, by any of the full member authorities, the following information will be provided by the secretariat to that new member.

- A copy of the aims and constitution of SCOPAC
- A copy of the most up-to-date business plan
- Links to the SCOPAC website
- A copy of the non technical guide

Consideration has also been given to a range of forms of induction meeting. Ideally each new member should be provided with an induction opportunity soon after they commence their role. In practical terms new members do not join on a predefined timetable and introduction of such induction sessions needs to be proportionate with the role and activities of SCOPAC. The timing of elections and appointments varies between operating authorities, and roles change within local authorities on a regular basis. It is suggested that a short annual induction session should be held following the autumn meeting of SCOPAC. This session will be hosted by key officers, the Chairman and perhaps one or two experienced members. The local officer would be expected to attend the session in support of their member to provide local context.

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal for development of new member induction initiatives

3.6 Involvement of RFDC in future SCOPAC meetings

Members of the southern region RFDC were invited to the December 11 2009 meeting of SCOPAC, primarily in connection with the EA presentation on the National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping Project. Elected members have often commented in the past that there is limited opportunity to feed into the democratic process linked with the Regional Flood Defence Committees (RFDC), and that better interaction would be welcomed. This is particularly notable with regards to the local levy and delivery of local EA services to coastal communities.

On this basis it is suggested that a standing invitation be extended to members of the Southern and Wessex RFDC members to attend SCOPAC.

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal that an invitation be extended to members of the Wessex and Southern RFDC members to attend SCOPAC.

3.5 Training in connection with National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping

The Environment Agency provided presentations to the December 11 2009 meeting of SCOPAC, in connection with development of the National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping. This is due to be released in batches throughout the region from summer 2010 and has some significant implications that may well involve elected member responses. It is suggested that there may be some considerable value in providing training in the use, application and implications of the mapping to members, when this becomes available. A range of training options have been considered, although resources are limited.

It is suggested that the Environment Agency are asked to provide a suitable member briefing session, perhaps to coincide with the next SCOPAC meeting

Recommendation: For decision

To approve the proposal that an invitation be extended to the Environment Agency to provide suitable training to SCOPAC members in application of the National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping.

Papers for information

Officers workshop series	Paper E
GOSE/DEFRA coastal change and planning conference	Paper F

Report by Professor Andrew Bradbury, Chairman of Southern Coastal Group