

Report of the Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group

A Review of constitution and financial procedures

The constitution and administrative procedures for the SCOPAC were last modified about five years ago. Recent reviews by Officers have identified the need to update the document, to provide clarification of a number of issues; these include election procedures, holding office, procurement and approval of research. The Terms of Reference, outlined in Part I remain unchanged and these have been formulated in parallel with similar documents which are applied consistently on a national basis. Part II sets out the administrative provisions including membership, roles and operation and it is anticipated that some small modifications should improve clarity of some procedures. It is suggested that officers from the southern coastal group review and update the document, for subsequent agreement by SCOPAC members. Officers of the Southern Coastal Group have already agreed that a similar exercise should be conducted for the Southern Coastal Group and they have already been asked to highlight any areas that need consideration.

It is recommended that SCOPAC approves that a review of the existing constitution is undertaken.

Recommendation: For decision

B National Network of Coastal Monitoring programmes – application for next phase

This report is to inform Elected Members on progress for the development of the Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme and the National Network of Regional Monitoring Programmes. The existing DEFRA grant aid funded Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme (phase III) is in the first year of operation. MTP allocations for the programme are lower than the approved sums and the allocation this year has been reduced by 28%.

As previously reported, the implications of the programme cuts are far reaching. The Channel Coastal Observatory team has been reduced in size by two staff. Similarly, the Worthing Borough Council and Canterbury City Council teams have each been reduced by one member. The implications of these cuts mean that it will be extremely difficult to deliver the complete programme, although more efficient delivery methods have been developed to overcome some of the problems. 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.

An agreement was originally signed by officers at the most senior level in the Environment Agency, as detailed in the approval for the scheme application, which allowed all data to be made freely available and free to all. The programme partners have subsequently been informed that Environment Agency rules do not permit this.

Currently the EA data can only be made available to scheme partners and this must currently be delivered directly by the EA. The Channel Coastal Observatory system has been designed to enable free access to all and is unable to deal with the necessary restrictions at this stage.

Discussions with the EA national data team have now reached the point where interim proposals have been put in place which would release EA funded data sets for non-commercial end-use, which cannot currently be made available via the Channel Coastal Observatory website. All data commissioned by Local Authorities is already made freely available to all, and this is in line with recent Cabinet Office best practice guidance. The proposals will enable access only for non-commercial end use, for Environment Agency funded data, but this is considered to be a step in the right direction. These proposals must be endorsed in a suitably robust manner by the Environment Agency to enable delivery to commence in line with this approach and a signed statement from an appropriate level is required before proceeding.

The programme partners intend to continue to resolve the challenges of making all data freely available and free to all, as agreed in the scheme application and in line with the programme philosophy.

Excellent progress has been made with programme delivery and the use of in-house local authority teams within the programme continues to be efficient. A coordinated approach to procurement has been undertaken nationally for contracted programme elements; this is being coordinated by New Forest District Council. The contract for wave and tidal measurement has been let and is being delivered successfully.

Recent discussions with BGS have identified future opportunities for nearshore geological work that will be complementary to the regional monitoring programmes and these will add to the partnership joint working with the MCA to deliver bathymetric surveys.

Although the new monitoring programme phase has recently commenced, it is now necessary to begin preparation for an application for further funding to commence in 2017. This is a complicated process as it requires integration of the seven regional programmes on a national basis, and will also require an approval by the Environment Agency's Large Projects Review Group. Andrew Bradbury has agreed to undertake the national coordination of the application, on behalf of the national steering group.

The Southern Coastal Group has already provided support for an agreement that New Forest District Council should continue to act as lead authority for the next round of applications. Endorsement by the SCOPAC coastal group is recommended.

Recommendation: For Decision

C SMP Action Plans – update on reporting (Paper D)

The regional coastal groups are now expected to report on progress and development of shoreline management plans and associated action plans on an annual basis. A summary of progress has been prepared in connection with the five SMPs within the SCOPAC region.

This has been prepared in accordance with a template spread-sheet which is to be used on a national basis and an update showing progress over the past year has been highlighted.

Indications are that actions are currently generally being conducted in accordance with the SMPs. It is noted that the individual operating authorities have the responsibility to progress actions and that the role of the coastal group is purely in the reporting of progress.

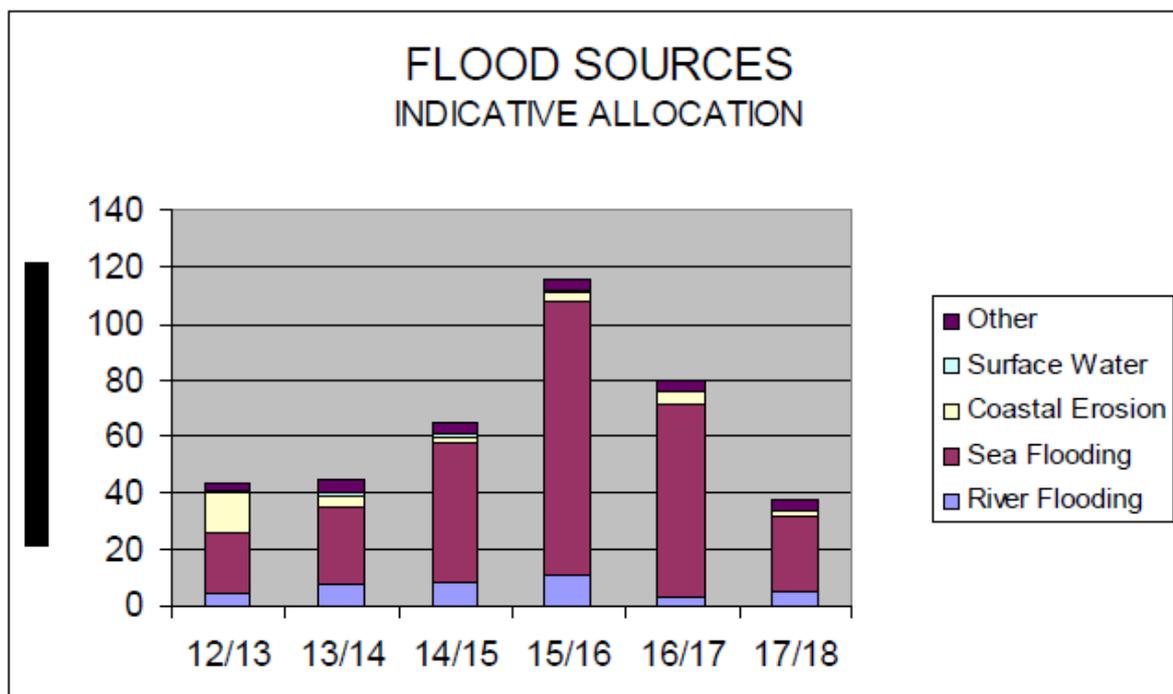
Recommendation: For information

D Funding allocations for coastal erosion

It has become clear that significantly less grant in aid funding is likely to be allocated to coastal erosion schemes over the next few years.

The chart below is extracted from papers presented to the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. It sets out the indicative allocation for expenditure of approximately £45million for the financial year 2013/14. Planned expenditure is identified by damage source, and shows that about £16 million (2013/14) of proposed investment is to protect people and property from coastal erosion. Indicative allocations for future years for coastal erosion schemes plummet typically to between £2-4million per year, over the following five years. This somewhat alarming pattern appears to bear out suspicions which have suggested that funding for coastal protection schemes will become increasingly difficult.

This anomaly was highlighted at the RFCC, with some concern expressed by members. The fact that flooding is an ephemeral damage process, whilst erosion results in permanent loss of property, was also emphasized. Note: similar figures were not provided for the Wessex regional flood and coastal committee, which covers the zone to the west of the New Forest DC/ Christchurch BC boundary.



Following discussions with the SCOPAC Chairman it is suggested that a small scale investigation is conducted to examine the reasons for this decline in funding and to clarify any fundamental reasons why coastal erosion projects perform so poorly in the grant in aid assessment process. It is suggested that funding of £3000 be approved to conduct the investigation.

A short brief for this project will be prepared in conjunction with the research subgroup, which will meet in March. Expressions of interest will be sought from full member organisations and an appropriately resourced organisation appointed by the Southern Coastal Group to undertake the work, under delegated powers.

Recommendation: For decision. That £3000 be allocated to funding of an investigation into the funding of coast protections schemes.

E Potential SCOPAC /SECG conference

Officers have considered suggestions that a SCOPAC conference be held, perhaps in partnership with the Southeast Coastal Group. SCOPAC has held a number of successful events in the past and regularly runs training events and field visits for its membership.

Before considering whether such an event is now deliverable, potential benefits have been considered.

- Generation of income
- Provision of events not covered elsewhere
- Improving the understanding of partners
- Raising the profile of SCOPAC
- Efficiency of delivery

The resource and investment needed to run conferences is high and no organisations have spare resources that can be used freely in order to organise such an event. This makes running such events costly and it seems that costs of resources required might exceed the potential income. Small scale events are currently run successfully by SCOPAC on a localised basis, but these are delivered on a goodwill basis by officers and require less organisation than a formal conference.

Most specialist subjects are covered in events elsewhere, and at this stage there is no single topic that SCOPAC is keen to disseminate. There may be more opportunities in the future following completion of some of the large scale research projects which have commenced recently, but these will not be complete within the next two years.

SCOPAC constantly strives to improve the understanding of partners and regularly holds field visits and training events that already meet this requirement. These events are well attended by the membership and receive excellent feedback from members. The recent

approach to inviting external organisations to attend for a fee has reduced the cost of running such events.

Raising the profile of SCOPAC within a political context may be beneficial, but specific targets and target audiences are needed to achieve this. No obvious targets have been identified at this stage, although these may be developed in the future.

A number of other professional organisations, e.g, ICE, CIWEM hold conferences and there may be some benefits in partnering with one of these groups to deliver a conference. This approach provides some scope for efficiencies and it is suggested that officers examine the possibility of joint delivery of events in the future.

In summary, the consensus of officers is that it is not appropriate at present to hold a SCOPAC conference, but that potential opportunities for delivery of such an event in partnership with others should be pursued in the future.

Recommendation: For information