

## Paper C - Report of Chairman of Southern Coastal Group

### a. Annual report

The Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group is required to produce an annual report for submission to both the coastal groups and to the Environment Agency. This is produced to an agreed format provided by the Environment Agency.

The report summarises notable activities undertaken during the financial year 2012-2013. In particular, the document highlights the financial benefits of membership to each of the coastal group members.

The annual report is attached as Paper D.

Recommendation: For information

### b. Funding of coastal chairs for EA strategic activities

Since the Environment Agency started to provide a strategic overview on the coast, it has provided a coordinating role for the coastal groups on a national basis. Whilst the Environment Agency does not provide financial support for the tactical operation of the Coastal Groups, it is able to fund staff time costs of the Chairmen when engaged on a series of defined strategic activities, connected with the strategic overview. Historically, these have been funded via the coastal groups on an informal basis, based on activity schedules provided by the Chairmen. Essentially all staff time engaged on these activities was recovered on the basis of submitted timesheets. There was therefore no net cost to the coastal group, since income and outgoings balanced. One of the key difficulties of this arrangement was that there has been no guarantee that the coastal group would recover costs in a timely manner, since approval of expenditure was a complex and lengthy process. This approach has required that the coastal group makes budget provision for such activities. The delay in cost recovery has regularly resulted in the need to delay making commitments to other coastal group activities, which has been unsatisfactory and has resulted in budgeted expenditure not being allocated in a timely manner; this has been the case over the past three years.

The Environment Agency has produced an agreement document which it had planned would be signed by the secretariat host organisation for each coastal group. This approach appears to place unfair risk on the host organisation, when the Coastal Chairmen are not under their direct control. Havant Borough Council has subsequently been unable to sign the agreement. The organisation and relationship of the Chairmen to the Coastal group secretariat differs around the country. It has been decided therefore that individual agreements will be made directly between the Environment Agency and the Coastal Group Chairmen, and these have now been prepared and signed. This approach means that there will no longer need to be a (balancing) budget provision for the Chairmen working on EA strategic business. This simplifies the coastal group accounting and enables more streamlined planning of in year expenditure. This new arrangement applies also to the financial year 2012/13. Changes in the proposed budget for next year reflect these reductions in costs and income.

Recommendation: For information

### c. National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes

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 now commencing the second year of operation, within the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes. MTP allocations for the programme are lower than the approved sums and the allocation this year has been reduced by >30%.

As previously reported, the implications of the programme cuts are far reaching. The Channel Coastal Observatory, Worthing Borough Council and Canterbury City Council teams have been reduced by a total of four staff members. More efficient delivery methods have enabled some of the activities to be delivered at lower cost and the in-house teams continue to deliver with an efficiency that just outstrips the reductions in costs for the in-house elements, without loss of programme. This has been partially possible due to the fairly benign conditions over the past winter, which has restricted the need for post storm surveys.

The reduced budgets for the coming year are more problematic since activities must be undertaken that are reliant upon tendered external costs (bathymetric surveys); the costs of these have risen significantly, possibly due to additional demand from the offshore renewables industry. It seems unlikely that all planned surveys will be achievable within the budget. Similarly, the costs of management of the hydrodynamic programme are higher than projected, probably because more incidents have occurred affecting buoy deployments. It should be noted that the programme delivery lies well within the original approved sum however.

No further progress has been made on resolution of the availability of data funded directly by the Environment Agency, which can currently 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. The programme management team is currently awaiting endorsement of proposals in a suitably robust manner by the Environment Agency to enable data delivery to commence. 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. Bathymetric survey tenders are currently under review and a contract for aerial surveys is currently out to tender.

Recent discussions with British Geological Survey 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 Maritime and Coastguard Agency to deliver bathymetric surveys.

Preparation for an application for further funding to commence in 2017 is now underway. Changes to funding procedures are currently being considered to see what implications these might have on programme development and these are being resolved with input from finance officers at a senior level within the Environment Agency. A small national team has been discussing the integration of the seven regional programmes on a national basis, together with the method of submission to 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.

Recommendation: For information

d. Feedback on national coastal chairs meeting - Funding of coast protection in Local Authorities (Paper E)

The Environment Agency has produced a paper summarising recent changes to local authority coast protection funding arrangements; this has previously been presented to the Coastal Chairmen. A detailed explanation is to be provided by Phil Winrow Head of FCERM & Business Finance at the Environment Agency at a later stage. The paper provides a broad overview of changes to funding and presents a simplified explanation of the implications for coast protection funding.

Recommendation: For information

e. RFCC coastal focus – opportunity to highlight coast protection issues

The regional Coastal Group Chairmen attend the quarterly regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC) as observers, at the invitation of the Environment Agency. These committees provide the governance for the decision making process relating to the capital programme (MTP) and the levy programme, amongst other issues. The focus at these meetings is predominantly on flooding issues although funding of coast protection is also considered part of the portfolio. The composition of the committees is primarily made up of representatives of Lead Local Flood Authorities, plus members directly appointed by the EA. The only representation of District Councils (Coast Protection Authorities) is where, by coincidence, members are both district and county council members, or for unitary authorities. It is perhaps not surprising that Coastal Protection is rarely a highlight of discussions. This has been highlighted recently and it has been suggested that a meeting should be held with more of a coastal focus. This has been welcomed by the Coastal Group Chairmen and the meeting is planned to take place in July at the National Oceanography centre. It is expected that the regional coastal chairmen will be invited to give presentations to this meeting and it is suggested that the SCOPAC membership debate issues that they would wish to be raised at the RFCC. Suggestions for subject headings are presented below.

- i. Local authority representation on RFCCs
- ii. Linkages between members and Coastal authority members.
- iii. Use of levy funding
- iv. Contributions for schemes
- v. Scheme prioritisation and the apparent reduction in coastal erosion funding