

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 and 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 concluded for this phase in March 2012. The whole of the programme has been delivered within budget, for the whole of the southeast, with the exception of one bathymetric survey package which has been subject to the contractor going into administration. Efforts are being made to recover the survey data which has been collected but not processed.

The first five year phase of the new national network commenced in April 2012. MTP allocations for the programme continue to be lower than the approved sums and the allocation this year has been reduced by 28%. 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.

Discussions with the EA national data team are ongoing to resolve the difficulties with making EA funded data sets freely available and free to all, as agreed in the scheme application. 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.

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.

Discussions with Natural England are on-going and potential opportunities for further savings are being explored, related to aerial surveys and ecological mapping. Encouraging progress has been made with English Nature data, which is now made freely available and free to all via the Open Government Licence. 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.

The two projects which had previously been approved within the medium term plan (MTP), for commencement in 2012, have now been further developed and full applications have been made for the projects. Dr Sam Cope and Prof Andrew Bradbury presented applications to the southeast Environment Agency project appraisal board in September. We are delighted to report that these applications have both been successful. We are now awaiting written confirmation of the approvals before commencing the projects.

The first project 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 Member and Officer Events: 2012 Summer Field visit

The summer field visit to Hurst Spit is reported in the research report.

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 information.

5.4 Annual report

The SCOPAC and Southern coastal group terms of reference both outline a requirement to deliver an annual report on progress of the groups, which is presented as paper D. The Environment Agency's National team has also placed a requirement on the Chairmen of the Coastal Groups to produce an annual report. The supporting report has been prepared to the guideline template provided by the EA. The report outlines key achievements made throughout the year 2011-2012, including political, training and shoreline management plan progress. It also outlines key research outputs and importantly identifies the key financial benefits of membership of the coastal group.

Recommendation: For information.

5.5 Membership

Following discussions at the last meeting of SCOPAC, one to one discussions have taken place with a number of the partner organisations. We are pleased to report that two of the operating authorities previously on associate membership have joined SCOPAC as full members this year. Fareham Borough Council and West Dorset District Council have both rejoined SCOPAC this year as full members and this is a great step forward. Both organisations are warmly welcomed as full members.

We are aspiring to have all coastal risk management authorities as full members, but this has not been achieved and some have declined this for funding reasons. Full resolution of the membership differences has not yet been achieved, although protracted discussions have been held at officer level. Further discussions are planned to resolve and simplify the complex membership situation.

Recommendation: For information.

5.6 Technical fact guide - Southampton City Council have produced an excellent technical fact sheet relating to the CCATCH study, which has been conducted by a number of partners. A copy of the document is included as paper E. This document could well serve as a template for local application

Recommendation: For information.