



Meeting Name: SCOPAC Meeting

Meeting Date: 15th November 2019

Report Title: SCOPAC and SCG Reshaping and Refreshing the Groups

Report By: Lyall Cairns Chairman of the Southern Coastal Group

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider and agree the future arrangements for the efficient and effective running of the Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline (SCOPAC) and the Southern Coastal Group (SCG) to meet the future tidal flood and erosion risk climate change challenges at the coast.

2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 **The Southern Coastal Group and SCOPAC be merged into a single coastal group and renamed Southern Coastal Group and SCOPAC.**
- 2.2 **The current Chairman of SCOPAC be designated as the SCOPAC Champion for the Group to be the signatory for correspondence on behalf of SCOPAC and conduct proceedings of the Annual Conference and Annual Field Visit.**
- 2.3 **That delegated responsibility be given to the Chairman of the SCG and the SCOPAC Champion to draft a new constitution for the merged SCG and SCOPAC groups.**
- 2.4 **The Coastal Business Partner responsible for reporting on the Groups financial position be instructed to combine the accounts into a single set of accounts.**
- 2.5 **The Chairman of the SCG be instructed to make a further application for RFCC Local Levy funds to support the delivery of the objectives within the business plan for the financial years 2020/21 onwards.**
- 2.6 **That delegated responsibility be given to the Coastal Research Chairman to combine the SCOPAC and SCG websites into a single website.**

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline held their first meeting in 1986 to share knowledge, collaborate for mutual benefit and take a more holistic approach to complex coastal issues without the limitations of Local Authority (LA) boundaries between Lyme Regis and Shoreham-by-Sea. This brought together LA's, the EA (previously NRA) and other organisations involved in managing the coastline inclusive of councillors and officers. SCOPAC subscriptions also enabled in excess of £1million of investment into innovative research into challenging technical issues faced along this coastline resulting in numerous outcomes that have shaped our sector.
- 3.2 In 2008, recognising the benefits of the way SCOPAC was working, Defra introduced seven Coastal Groups around the English coastline. The Southern Coastal Group was therefore established from Portland Bill to Selsey Bill made up of officer representatives from organisations involved in managing tidal flood and erosion risk at the coast.
- 3.3 Membership subscription fees are collected by the host organisation, Havant Borough Council, which in 2019/20 accrued to £49,565.12. There are three levels of membership in place with differing fees where in 2019/20 Full Members paid £3,488.13, Associate Members paid £436.46 and Mailing List Members paid £72.75. The fees are then utilised to meet the costs of the groups which included administration, financial assurance, insurance, research, site visits and supporting delivery to implement the business plan.
- 3.4 In December 2018 the SCG made a successful Local Levy bid to both the Southern and Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committees to the sum of £46k to support the delivery of the business plan in 2019/20. This has been well received by the group and has enabled a positive step change in the groups ability to deliver against the objectives contained within the supporting delivery business plan.
- 3.5 Following devolution and the combining of several LA's in Dorset the new Dorset Authority and BCP Council have requested a reduction in their subscriptions for 2020/2021 onwards.
- 3.6 In December 2018, Hampshire County Council made the decision to withdraw from SCOPAC and subsequently in October 2019 Worthing Council gave notice that they will be withdrawing from April 2020. The loss of these authorities from SCOPAC will have an adverse impact through a loss of political support and a reduction in subscription income.
- 3.7 SCOPAC and SCG have worked well alongside each other as separate "sister" organisations to meet the challenges of the day. However, recent pressure from climate change, austerity, the loss of experience as senior officers retire, loss of Hampshire County Council and Worthing Council as key organisations and devolution within Dorset has resulted in the groups recognising a need to reshape and refresh the way it operates.

4.0 Options Considered

- 4.1 SCG & SCOPAC - Continue existing arrangements across both SCG & SCOPAC with supplementary windfall grants where possible e.g. Local Levy but acknowledge

that this will result in a reduced available budget, reduced service and reduced research activity.

- 4.2 SCG evidence outcomes for 2019/20 business plan delivery utilising Local Levy funds and make a further 5 year Local Levy bid to fund SCG Business; leaving research activity to SCOPAC,
- 4.3 SCG evidence outcomes for 2019/20 business plan delivery utilising Local Levy funds and make a further 5 year Local Levy bid to fund SCG Business but include a sum (circa £10k/yr) for the Research Chair to coordinate and pitch for research opportunities that benefit SCG/SCOPAC area,
- 4.4 SCOPAC continue with subscriptions at various levels to fund the administrative SCOPAC (not SCG) and research activities of the group; the level of activity will be limited by the number of members and value of subscriptions; these subscriptions will not be shared with the SCG.
- 4.5 SCOPAC reduce subscriptions (to fund research only) to become a more inclusive political lobbying group. Small research pot of £25k split between SCOPAC members which acts as seed funding for larger research initiatives. Research outputs to be shared alongside SCG policy updates. SCOPAC to be reduced to single annual conference.
- 4.6 SCOPAC remove subscriptions to become more of an inclusive political lobbying group and any research would need to be self-financing from either windfall grants or contributions from the beneficiary members promoting the activity. SCOPAC to be reduced to single annual conference.
- 4.7 SCOPAC remove subscriptions to become more of an inclusive political lobbying group and research not funded. SCOPAC to be reduced to single annual conference.
- 4.8 SCOPAC dissolve the group once funds exhausted.
- 4.9 SCOPAC spatially based regional subscriptions.
- 4.10 Merged Group SCG & SCOPAC spatially based regional subscriptions.

5.0 Executive Summary

- 5.1 Both SCOPAC and the SCG have been considering and debating the need to reshape and refresh the groups with a view to making them both fit for the future and to meet the climate change challenges at the coast.
- 5.2 Having considered each of the options to reshape the groups, the SCG are recommending to SCOPAC that the two groups are merged into a single group that retains the identity and branding of both.
- 5.3 SCG proposed a change of designation from the SCOPAC Chairman to SCOPAC Champion to be an advocate for the work of the coastal group, conduct proceedings at the annual conference and annual field visit. The SCG were of a view this title better reflected the role in response to the climate change challenge and removed any ambiguity with the role of the Chairman of the SCG.
- 5.4 The two separate constitutions, the separate accounts and the separate websites of the groups will need to be combined if the groups are to be merged.

- 5.5 The current Chairman of SCOPAC is within her final term and it is recommended this be extended as the SCOPAC Champion until an election at the 2020 Annual Conference.
- 5.6 Proposed change in approach to meeting the costs of the group through a further RFCC Local Levy Bid for supporting the delivery of the business plan and a move to a more spatially based approach to subscriptions with a single level of membership. The constitution will need to be amended accordingly but it is envisaged that based on the need for 2019/20 the Dorset LA's subscription will be circa £13k, Hampshire LA's circa £13k, Chichester DC circa £2k, Isle of Wight Council circa £2k and the Environment Agency £6k. It is envisaged that the LA's will negotiate between themselves to decide how to agree the most equitable way to meet their spatially derived membership fee.
- 5.7 The constitution will also need to reflect the proposed single level of membership where each LA member will have a single vote and the Environment Agency two votes to reflect the size of the organisation and cross cutting two RFCC areas.

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