



PORTFOLIO: ENVIRONMENT

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SOUTH-EAST STRATEGIC REGIONAL COASTAL MONITORING PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement, in principle, to proceed with an application to DEFRA for the south-east strategic regional coastal monitoring programme.
- 1.2 The application needs to be made to DEFRA in January in order to achieve scheme approvals for commencement of the programme in April 2002. Agreed budget provision has already been made for the scheme within the approved capital development programme. The financial and organisational structure of the proposed strategic monitoring programme is complex as it involves many partner local authorities: for this reason the programme deserves additional consideration.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The New Forest District Council Coastal Group have been involved in developing and preparing an application to DEFRA for the south-east strategic regional coastal monitoring programme.
- 2.2 The need for the project is discussed.
- 2.3 Budget provision has already been made for the scheme within the approved capital development programme.
- 2.4 The programme has a complex structure and includes 31 partner local authorities and the Environment Agency.
- 2.5 Programme management will require additional resources, when funding has been agreed. Details of the implications of management of a regional centre will be discussed in a further report.
- 2.6 There is a need to move the programme forward to the DEFRA application stage in January.
- 2.7 A decision to proceed is needed in order to meet the DEFRA funding timescale.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Historically, local authorities have concentrated their coastal management efforts within their own administrative boundary. As coastal processes do not recognise administrative boundaries, wider consideration is required. Effective management of the coast necessarily requires co-operation between local authorities and the Environment Agency (EA); this is currently delivered through Shoreline Management Plans and Coastal Strategy Studies. In turn these strategic plans require high quality coastal process data gathered over many years, to provide a sound statistical basis for decision-making.
- 3.2 The current approach to coastal monitoring is piecemeal across the south-east region and does not deliver best value: data is poorly managed and many local programmes are inadequate. This approach has been criticised by the DEFRA Regional Engineer who has supported the development of a consistent regional approach to coastal process monitoring.

4. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 Following an initiative by the EA and the Coastal Groups of the south-east to develop a strategic regional approach to coastal monitoring, NFDC were invited to conduct a scoping review; this was conducted under the guidance of a regional steering group. NFDC have been national leaders in this field for a number of years, having developed a local monitoring programme that is considered to be a best practice model. The scoping study reviewed current practice, best practice, data management and analysis issues for approximately 1000km of coastline between Portland Bill and the North Kent Coast. An outline programme and management framework for a proposed strategic approach to regional monitoring was produced for the study area. The scoping review has been circulated to, and critiqued by, local authorities throughout the south-east; its findings are supported by general consensus of the regional coastal groups, the EA and the DEFRA Regional Engineer.
- 4.2 Subsequently, a DEFRA funded preliminary study has been conducted to plan and design a detailed framework and programme for a strategic regional coastal monitoring programme; this too has been conducted by NFDC, in partnership with the EA and the coastal groups of the south-east. The NFDC model has been used to design the strategic regional monitoring programme; this approach provides a consistent region wide risk-based approach to coastal monitoring.
- 4.3 The programme comprises the following elements:
- Survey programme of a wide range of coastal process measurements.
 - Production of regionally consistent standards and specification.
 - Management of the programme via three regional cells, each managed by a lead local authority, and the Environment Agency.
 - Data management, analysis and dissemination via a regional data centre.
 - Regional programme co-ordination.
 - Programme performance review by a regional management panel.

- 4.4 The proposed approach has been discussed and is supported by both the coastal groups and the DEFRA Regional Engineer. There are potentially 31 local authority and EA partners within the programme. There is a further need to develop existing partnership arrangements with consultants and universities.
- 4.5 The proposed framework provides three regional programmes, designed to common standards, and a high level programme managed by the EA. A project and data management team will co-ordinate the whole programme: NFDC are the obvious choice to fulfil this role because of previous experience, current expertise and recent involvement in the programme development.
- 4.6 The NFDC role will be:
- Lead authority for the Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline (SCOPAC) regional cell, responsible for programme administration and procurement.
 - Delivery of coastal surveys within parts of the SCOPAC monitoring cell.
 - Regional co-ordinator, responsible for co-ordination of the overall south-east programme.
 - Regional data centre host, providing staff and facilities to manage, analyse and disseminate data.

5. APPLICATION

- 5.1 Before the scheme can proceed it must be approved by DEFRA. Four separate but co-ordinated applications for scheme approval will be made to DEFRA in January by the lead authorities (including NFDC) and the EA. Applications will be made with a view to the programme commencing in April 2002. A single co-ordinated technical report and economic analysis will support the scheme applications; this is under preparation by NFDC and will also be submitted to DEFRA in mid January.
- 5.2 Consultations are ongoing with all of the coast protection authorities within the region to fine-tune the programme and to clarify and agree financial contributions; these will continue until all of the participants have signed up. The timescale for programme development is tight and a successful application is reliant upon full support from other coastal operating authorities.
- 5.3 If DEFRA approve the scheme it will proceed immediately. Once scheme approval has been made there is a requirement for the scheme to be completed in accordance with the application.
- 5.4 If DEFRA do not approve the scheme it will not proceed and there will be no further obligations to NFDC.

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 If the programme application is successful, it will be funded by DEFRA via the normal capital coast protection scheme funding process, for the period of the initial application, of five years. New Forest District Council will receive the whole of the grant awarded to the “SCOPAC region” element of the programme (the area between Portland Bill and Selsey Bill). Non grant-aided costs relating to work conducted within the NFDC boundary will be funded through the normal SCA route for coast protection schemes.
- 6.2 Non-grant aided costs relating to other local authorities will be recharged directly to those authorities. A structure for recharging other participants has been agreed with corporate accountancy to ensure that NFDC are not at financial risk from the programme. Agreements have been drawn up for signing by other participating authorities. Programmes within other authority boundaries will not proceed without the appropriate agreement being in place. These agreements will operate in a similar manner to those used previously for collaborative Shoreline Management Plans.
- 6.3 Costs of regional co-ordination and data management elements will be recovered from the lead authorities for the other regions, in a similar manner.
- 6.4 Budget costs have been prepared which suggest that the total programme value for the next five years will be approximately £8.3m for the whole of the south-east region, at current price base. The total value of the SCOPAC element of the programme, for which NFDC will have direct responsibility, is £4.1m over five years.
- 6.5 The development programme process does not make provision for capital projects with an indefinite life span, but programme costs of £2.8m have been estimated for the first four years of the programme; this is still considered to be a reasonable estimate for this period. Further submissions will be made to the development programme as additional phases of the programme proceed.
- 6.6 The NFDC element of programme costs is estimated at £540k over 5 years.
- 6.7 The economic analysis demonstrates that the programme has the potential for large-scale, region wide, actual and efficiency savings to the taxpayer; these may exceed £25m, during the first five years.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The programme will have significant staff, accommodation and equipment implications; these will be funded directly via the programme. A number of additional staff will be required on fixed term contracts. A full report on staffing issues and accommodation will follow. Resource requirements are currently being refined in conjunction with fine-tuning of the programme.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Improved decision making for both environmental impacts and financing of coastal protection.

9. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Coastal local authorities between Portland and the Isle of Grain. Environment Agency, English Nature.

11. RECOMMENDATION

11.1 That approval in principle is given to proceed with the scheme application and programme development.

Further Information:

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Background Papers:

None