

CABINET - 7 AUGUST 2002

## **SOUTH-EAST STRATEGIC REGIONAL COASTAL MONITORING PROGRAMME - RESOURCE PLAN**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement to detailed proposals for management and resources for the south-east strategic regional coastal monitoring programme. The programme is a high profile regional partnership initiative, which is being lead by New Forest District Council.
- 1.2 In principle approval has already been provided by Cabinet to proceed with the scheme application and programme development subject to DEFRA funding approval.
- 1.3 The previous report (dated 2 January 2002) identified the need for detailed consideration of the physical resources required to deliver the programme, and highlighted the need for further reporting on this programme aspect.
- 1.4 All associated project costs will be fully recovered and significant revenue savings as set out in paragraph 6.7 will be achieved.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The New Forest District Council Coastal Group have submitted an application to DEFRA for the south-east strategic regional coastal monitoring programme, in line with Cabinet recommendations. Approval to proceed from DEFRA is awaited.
- 2.2 Budget provision has already been made for the programme within the approved capital development programme.
- 2.3 The programme has a complex structure and includes 31 partner local authorities and the Environment Agency. All partners have now made the necessary commitments to the programme.
- 2.4 Programme management will require additional resources and establishment of a regional programme management centre. Details of the implications of management of a regional centre are discussed.
- 2.5 Proposals are presented for recruitment of dedicated staff, accommodation and programme management.
- 2.6 Costs associated with establishment of the regional data centre and programme delivery will be provided through the dedicated programme budget.
- 2.7 A decision to proceed is needed in order to meet the programme timetable.

### 3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Background details of the project were agreed by Cabinet on 2 January 2002.

#### **4. APPLICATION AND APPROVALS**

- 4.1 Before the project can proceed it must be approved by DEFRA. Scheme approval is now awaited following the application.
- 4.2 The project has already been approved by the Environment Agency National Review Group.
- 4.3 All of the coast protection authorities within the region have now agreed financial contributions and have signed up to the first five years of the programme.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 If DEFRA do not approve the scheme it will not proceed and there will be no further obligations to NFDC.

#### **5. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY**

- 5.1 Following in principle approval of development of the programme, an application has been made to DEFRA; this comprises a business case, including a benefit cost analysis and a project plan.
- 5.2 A project board has been established to manage the project across the region; this comprises representatives of DEFRA, Environment Agency (EA), and local authority representatives of Coastal Groups.
- 5.3 Agreements for programme composition and financial contributions have been established with 31 partner local authorities and the EA. All partners have now made the necessary commitments to the programme.
- 5.4 A formal management partnership agreement is being drawn up between the lead authorities and the EA.
- 5.5 A detailed survey programme has been designed and contract documents are currently being drawn up. Regionally consistent standards and specifications have been developed.
- 5.6 An advertisement has been placed for expressions of interest in the programme within the European Journal, in accordance with audit requirements. The proposed programme delivery will include procurement via a combination of the following methods:
  - Competitive tendering.
  - In-house delivery.
  - Service level agreements with partner local authorities.
  - Partnership with an academic institution.
  - Purchase of software, support and equipment from sole suppliers.
  - Supply of consultancy services using competitively tendered term rates established by the Environment Agency.

5.7 Following DEFRA scheme approvals, NFDC will have a management responsibility for:

- Programme administration and procurement for the Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline (SCOPAC) regional cell.
- Delivery of coastal surveys within parts of the SCOPAC monitoring cell.
- Provision of a regional co-ordinator and co-ordination of the overall south-east programme.
- Provision of staff, accommodation and technical facilities for a regional data centre to manage, analyse and disseminate data.
- Reporting to the regional project board.

## 6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The programme will have significant staff, accommodation and equipment implications; these will be funded directly via the programme.

6.2 The project board have agreed that a regional data centre should be established to service the programme; this will be known as the Channel Coastal Observatory and be managed by NFDC. It will be part of the Coastal Group within Environment Services under the direction of Andrew Bradbury who will remain based at Lymington. This centre will require dedicated accommodation with a suitable computing infrastructure and adequate technical support. Current accommodation within NFDC cannot meet these requirements.

6.3 The project board has agreed that the most suitable location for such a centre would be in association with a well-established university, with a proven track record in coastal data management and a high probability of long-term future.

6.4 The University of Southampton has been identified as the most suitable location for this centre: it is central to the region; it hosts the National Oceanographic Library; a suitable computing infrastructure is already in place and previous long-term partnerships between NFDC and the University of Southampton have proven to be extremely successful.

6.5 A negotiated partnership arrangement is proposed with the University of Southampton to provide accommodation and technical support to the programme. Considerable educational benefits arise to both the University and the Local Authority Partnership from the programme. The proposed partnership approach is consistent with the Government's "Rethinking Construction" initiative. CMT recommendations to address this innovative approach suggest that the principles should be taken on board and that the initiative could be phased in starting with coastal strategy work. Discussions with the University of Southampton have indicated a desire to enter into a partnership agreement to provide support to the programme; this will include:

- Provision of serviced accommodation
- Provision of computing infrastructure
- Secondment of temporary specialist Southampton University GIS and Survey staff to the programme for programme development
- Development and maintenance of project web site
- Specialist training
- Survey vessel provision

- 6.6 Accommodation for dedicated programme staff will be provided at the University of Southampton, but staff will be direct employees of NFDC, working on behalf of the local authority partnership. Accommodation rates are expected to be comparable with current in-house costs.
- 6.7 Some of the monitoring work currently conducted by NFDC Coastal Group staff, and funded from revenue budgets, will become integrated within the new regional programme. The same staff will continue to work on similar activities within the new programme, but staff time will be charged to the regional programme capital budget instead of the revenue budget. In effect the revenue budget will be subsidised from the capital grant/SCA (supplementary credit approval) for the duration of the programme providing a year on year saving of approximately £30k. At the end of the five years the regional programme will be reviewed, but is expected to continue. If it was discontinued for any reason, this capital subsidy would be lost and there would no longer be an annual saving.
- 6.8 The programme will require a total of five additional staff for the coastal observatory and three additional staff to provide survey support. Specialist staff with skills in coastal processes, surveying and GIS will be recruited to service the programme; these staff will be recruited to the programme over a period of 12 months from programme commencement. Staff are expected to be recruited within salary bands 4(5), 5(2), and 6(1). The salary bands are indicative at this stage and will be subject to scoring of job descriptions. The scheme application to DEFRA makes specific provision for funding of this level of resource.
- 6.9 The additional annual costs of direct employment, inclusive of overheads, will be £310k for Coastal observatory staff and Coastal Surveyors; these costs will be funded through the regional programme and will not have NFDC revenue implications.
- 6.10 The additional staff will be employed on fixed term contracts.

## 7. **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1 Details of programme cost recovery are detailed in the previous report. These indicate that all associated programme costs will be recovered fully by NFDC.
- 7.2 Expenditure will be financed via the following routes:
- DEFRA grant aid
  - County Council Grant
  - Supplementary Credit Approval (SCA)
  - Contributions from participating partner local authorities
  - Contributions from other partner lead authorities
  - Technical and staff contributions from the University of Southampton
  - In kind contributions from the Geodata Institute
  - In kind contributions from the National Oceanographic Library

**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. EMPLOYEE SIDE COMMENTS**

10.1 The employee side welcome the opportunity for additional employment that this partnership will generate although the possibility that this could be of limited duration is of obvious concern.

10.2 The future employment of existing employees needs to be considered carefully so that they are not put at risk should the monitoring programme be discontinued in five years.

**11. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

11.1 Comments to be reported verbally at the meeting.

**12. CONSULTATION**

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

**13. RECOMMENDATION**

13.1 That approval in principle is given to proceed with establishment of the Channel Coastal Observatory and recruitment of appropriate fixed term staff, subject to DEFRA scheme approval and funding.

**Further Information:**

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**Background Papers:**

Report to Cabinet on 2 January 2002 South-East Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme

Report to CMT 16 October 2001, Rethinking Construction

Minute 5 to CMT 23 October 2001, Rethinking Construction