

## **NATIONAL NETWORK OF STRATEGIC REGIONAL COASTAL MONITORING PROGRAMMES (2011-2016)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report is to inform and seek agreement on proposals for the development of the Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme into the National Network of Regional Monitoring Programmes. This programme is a high profile regional partnership initiative, which is being lead by New Forest District Council (through the Channel Coastal Observatory).
- 1.2. The existing DEFRA grant aid funded Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme has been in operation since the financial year 2002/03. Funding continues until March 2012.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. Coastal risk management is now conducted over broad areas, controlled by coastal processes rather than simple administrative boundaries. This necessitates partnership working by adjoining local authorities.
- 2.2. Coastal risk management requires high quality and long term data sets to inform effective decision making in a complex environment.
- 2.3. The current approach to coastal monitoring throughout England is now well organised and structured nationally, both within individual Coastal Groups and on a regional basis. The current series of regional monitoring programmes, managed through a series of lead authorities on behalf of the Coastal Groups, provides a regionally co-ordinated and integrated approach to coastal monitoring, to maximise use of data and to provide best value.
- 2.4. The existing Southeast Strategic Regional Monitoring Programme has been promoted developed and implemented through NFDC.
- 2.5. A regional centre of excellence has been developed, through the formation of the Channel Coastal Observatory in 2002. The specialist team provides regional technical support for the programme, under the technical direction of Andrew Bradbury, and is based at the National Oceanography Centre Southampton. The team trains and provides a sustainable supply of specialist scientific and engineering staff that is able to service the requirements of all programme partners.
- 2.6. The Southeast Strategic Regional Monitoring Programme is recognised as an example of international best practice by maritime coastal authorities, consultants and the Environment Agency.
- 2.7. Although there is considerable voluntary cooperation between regions, there is some scope for improved consistency of approach on a national basis and also a need to achieve a number of national objectives. It is recognised that the regional approach to delivery provides the most suitable scale for delivery, since this enables adequate local engagement and also links at an appropriate scale with key strategic

regional initiatives such as shoreline management plans. The current structure provides both robust governance through the standing order procedures of the lead organisations and delivery at an appropriate scale to optimise both procurement requirements and local coordination.

2.8. Following discussions, between representatives of the Coastal Groups and the Environment Agency, the need for an integrated regional approach to coastal monitoring has been identified. This is to be developed by combining the existing regional monitoring programmes into a national network of strategic regional monitoring programmes. NFDC have been asked to lead this development through the national monitoring review group, based on their specialist experience.

### **3. NATIONAL PROGRAMME AIMS AND STRUCTURE**

3.1. The national network of strategic regional coastal monitoring programmes aims are:

- Drive efficiency in flood and coastal erosion risk management through a robust evidence based approach to decision making.
- Develop a National network of regional coastal monitoring programmes
- Develop nationally consistent guidance on the specification, management and delivery of coastal data and the development of monitoring programmes.
- Develop an integrated national network of regional coastal monitoring programmes that
  - use a consistent, repeatable, risk based and cost effective methods of monitoring the coastal environment.
  - optimise available funding to deliver both strategic and operational requirements
  - provide a sound evidence base for shoreline management plans, strategies and schemes to optimise beach management investment decisions
  - provide integration of regional data sets to inform national initiatives
  - develop collaboration between operating authorities and a sustainable skills base at local, regional and national scales.
- Establish a clear economic assessment of the benefits of monitoring and performance review criteria for future assessment of benefits
- Produce nationally consistent performance review criteria for assessment of monitoring programme benefits

3.2. The programme has a complex structure and will integrate the existing regional monitoring programmes for:

- The Southeast
- The Southwest
- The North East
- The North West
- Anglian
- East Riding of Yorkshire

3.3. All partner monitoring programmes have made the necessary commitment to the national programme

3.4. Programme management will require the specialist services of the Channel Coastal Observatory, together with additional resources to manage the national programme.

- 3.5. All costs associated with programme delivery will be provided through dedicated programme budgets and 100% grant aid.

#### **4. NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL ROLE**

- 4.1. NFDC will lead on programme development and implementation of the national network with input from the partner authorities.
- 4.2. The regional centre of excellence (Channel Coastal Observatory) hosted by NFDC will continue to operate in its present form but will “expand” to store and disseminate monitoring data from the regional programmes within the national network.
- 4.3. NFDC will continue to act as the lead authority for the southeast region, with continued input from the partner authorities of Worthing, Canterbury and the Environment Agency. With regard to the funding regime there will be a revision to budget management, in that NFDC will receive funding for the whole of the southeast programme. (previously funding was made directly available to the other partner authorities) In essence NFDC will act as a “clearing house” to distribute funding to the other partner authorities.
- 4.4. Large local authorities, such as NFDC, are expected to make a wider contribution to the local authority community and to take a lead role in national initiatives where appropriate skills are available. Such contributions to the community are reflected in periodic national assessments of local authorities and these have previously highlighted NFDCs strength in this area.

#### **5. APPLICATIONS AND APPROVALS**

- 5.1. Before the national programme can proceed it must be approved by the Environment Agency, through the Coast Protection Act of 1949.
- 5.2. A Strategy Appraisal Report is being prepared by NFDC (on behalf of the lead partners for the regional monitoring programmes) for submission to the Environment Agency’s National Review Group. The anticipated date of submission is May 2010.
- 5.3. Approval is being sought for the programme on a staggered five year national phasing. The current application being prepared is for the period April 2011 through to March 2017.
- 5.4. Once programme approval is received there will be a requirement to complete the programme in accordance with the application.

#### **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The Channel Coastal Observatory will continue in its current form as established for the southeast regional monitoring programme. Operational costs will continue to be 100% funded through the national programme, in accordance with grant memoranda.

- 6.2. NFDC employs 14 FTE officers for operation of the regional monitoring programme. Additional resource requirements for the transition to the national programme will be refined during the programme development. However, it is currently estimated that no additional staff will be required.
- 6.3. All officers specifically employed for the monitoring programme are 100% funded through the grant aid system; these staff are employed on fixed term contracts in-line with the funding stream.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. If the programme application is successful, it will be funded by grant aid administered by the Environment Agency, via the normal capital coast protection scheme funding process, for the period of the initial application of five years.
- 7.2. If the programme application is unsuccessful there will be no further cost implications (see paragraph 7.8).
- 7.3. The programme will be 100% funded through the Coast Protection Act grant rate system based on grant memorandum criteria. i.e. there will be no additional cost to the authority.
- 7.4. The current estimated cost of the national monitoring programme is between £30m and £33m (allowing for contingency) over the initial 5 years of the programme.
- 7.5. The financial responsibility for NFDC will be for £10m expenditure, this will allow for the delivery of the southeast programme along with management and co-ordination of the national programme.
- 7.6. The current practice of payment and recharging partners based on a service level agreement will be used for the national programme. The existing recharging structure will be revised as required and agreed with corporate accountancy, to ensure that there is no financial risk to NFDC throughout programme delivery.
- 7.7. The economic analysis demonstrates that the national programme has the potential for large-scale, region wide, actual and efficiency savings to the taxpayer, these are likely to exceed £200m during the first five years.
- 7.8. All staff currently engaged specifically to service this programme are employed on fixed term contracts. As most of these staff will have been in employment for more than two years there is an existing risk that redundancy payments would be required in the event that the project is not funded beyond 2012. A similar risk would be evident if the project is not funded beyond 2017. There is a risk that redundancy payments would be higher at the end of this phase due to potentially longer service. As this is the first career job for many of these staff, there is a reasonable expectation of staff turnover to aid career progression within five years; this has historically always been the case with the associated posts. On this basis the residual risk of additional costs is expected to be small.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None arising directly from this report

## **10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 None arising directly from this report

## **11, PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

11.1 The Environment Portfolio Holder supports the recommendations in the report for the development of the Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme into the National Network of Regional Monitoring Programmes.

## **12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 That approval in principle be given to the integration of the southeast monitoring programme into the national network of regional monitoring programmes;
- 12.2 That approval in principle be given for NFDC to continue to act as the lead authority in the application to the Environment Agency for funding of the national network of regional monitoring programmes; and
- 12.3 That approval in principle be given for NFDC to act as the lead authority in the development and management of the national network of regional monitoring programmes.

### **Further Information**

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- Annex 1. Report to Cabinet 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2002 – Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring programme
- Annex 2. Report to Cabinet 7<sup>th</sup> August 2002 – Southeast Strategic Regional Coastal Monitoring programme – Resource Plan