

## PHASE II OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF REGIONAL COASTAL MONITORING PROGRAMMES (2016/17-2021/22)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report is to inform and seek agreement from Members on proposals for the delivery and development of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme element of Phase II of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes. This programme is a high profile regional partnership initiative, which is being lead and coordinated by New Forest District Council (through the Channel Coastal Observatory).
- 1.2. The existing Defra grant aid funding for the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme, which has been in operation since 2002/03, continues until March 2017. The Defra grant aid funding for the other Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes continues until March 2016.

### 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 Coastal 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 Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme has been promoted, developed and implemented through this Council.
- 2.5. A regional centre of excellence has been developed, through the formation of the Channel Coastal Observatory in 2002. The specialist team provides national- and regional-scale technical support for the programme, under the technical direction of Travis Mason, 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 Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme is recognised as an example of international best practice by maritime coastal authorities, consultants and the Environment Agency.

- 2.7. There is considerable voluntary cooperation between regions, and it is recognised that the regional approach 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, this Council has been asked to continue to coordinate and develop the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes, based on their specialist experience.

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

3.1. The aims of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes are to:

- Drive efficiency in flood and coastal erosion risk management through a robust evidence based approach to decision making.
- 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 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, identify risk areas and hazards
  - provide integration of regional data sets to inform national coastal and marine management and planning initiatives
  - develop collaboration between operating authorities, and with other government-funded organisations, 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 National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes has a complex structure and will integrate the following existing regional monitoring programmes:

- Northeast
- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Anglian
- Southeast
- Southwest
- Northwest

- 3.3. All partner monitoring programmes have made the necessary commitment to the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes.
- 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 - NATIONALLY**

- 4.1. New Forest District Council will continue to lead and coordinate programme development, implementation and delivery of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes, with input from the partner authorities.
- 4.2. This Council will not have any involvement with the tender process to be followed by the other Regional Programme Lead Authorities, other than technical quality scoring assessments.
- 4.3. The regional centre of excellence (Channel Coastal Observatory) hosted by New Forest District Council will continue to operate in its present form including storing and disseminating monitoring data from the Regional Programmes within the national network.
- 4.4. Large local authorities, such as New Forest District Council, 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 New Forest District Council's strength in this area.

#### **5. NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL ROLE – SOUTHEAST REGION**

- 5.1. New Forest District Council will continue to act as the Lead Authority for the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme, with continued input from the partner authorities of Worthing Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Shepway District Council, Havant Borough Council and the Environment Agency. This Council will continue to receive funding for the whole of the Southeast programme. In essence the Council will act as a “clearing house” to distribute funding to the other partner authorities.
- 5.2. The Council will continue to be responsible for the framework agreements and subsequent contract awards and contract administration.
- 5.3. Service level Agreements will be established with the partner authorities of:-
  - Worthing Borough Council
  - Canterbury City Council
  - Shepway District Council,
  - Havant Borough Council

These will be for the provision of providing in-house services for undertaking topographic surveys, single beam bathymetry surveys, data analysis and provision of annual reports. The current estimated cost of the provision of these services by the four authorities is £3.7m.

5.4. NFDC staff costs over the five year programme are currently estimated at £2.5m, this allows for undertaking the following services:-

- Topographic surveys
- Bathymetric surveys
- Ecological monitoring
- Regional data management and analysis
- National data archive delivery and analysis
- Project management

## **6. APPLICATIONS AND APPROVALS**

6.1. Before Phase II of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes can proceed it must be approved by the Environment Agency, through the Coast Protection Act of 1949.

6.2. A Strategy Appraisal Report (StAR) is being prepared by New Forest District Council (on behalf of the lead partners for the Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes) for submission to the Environment Agency's Large Project Review Group. The anticipated date of submission is January 2015.

6.3. Approval is being sought for the programme on a staggered six year national phasing. The current application being prepared is for the period April 2016 through to March 2022.

6.4. Once programme approval is received there will be a requirement to complete the programme in accordance with the application.

## **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. The Channel Coastal Observatory will continue in its current form as established for the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme. Operational costs will continue to be 100% funded through the national programme, in accordance with grant memoranda.

7.2. New Forest District Council employs 12 FTE officers for the operation and development of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes and delivery of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme. It is currently estimated that no additional staff will be required.

7.3. 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, to reduce any financial risk of redundancy payments (should subsequent applications for funding not be successful from 2017). Risks of redundancy payments arising from failure to attract funding (from 2017) will be a maximum of £67,000. Realistically this

sum is likely to be much smaller, based upon typical staff turnover measured over 10 years. This is offset against the programme benefits, which will have delivered revenue savings to New Forest District Council of approximately £1.35 million from 2002-2017. These savings are delivered by year in year reductions to the coastal revenue budgets that reflect the grant aid.

7.4. In the unlikely event that further phases of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme do not continue beyond 2017, there would be some residual value of capital equipment, purchased to service the programme. This would remain in the ownership of New Forest District Council at the end of the programme and could have an estimated residual value of at least £120,000. Some of this equipment would be required to service ongoing revenue requirements.

7.5. The office facilities currently provided by the National Oceanography Centre are delivered on the basis of agreements which conclude at the end of each five year monitoring phase. There are no additional cost risks associated with these hosting arrangements, when considering possible termination of the programme in 2017.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. If Phase II of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes 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 six years (2016/17 to 2021/22).

8.2. If the programme application is unsuccessful there will be no further cost implications.

8.3. 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.

8.4. The current estimated cost of the national monitoring programme is in the order of £28M (allowing for contingency) over the proposed 6 years of the programme.

8.5. The financial responsibility for New Forest District Council will be for £10M expenditure, this will allow for the delivery of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme along with management and co-ordination of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes.

8.6. The current practice of payment and recharging partners based on a service level agreement will be used for the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes. The existing recharging structure will be revised as required and agreed with corporate accountancy, to ensure that there is no financial risk to New Forest District Council throughout programme delivery.

8.7. The economic analysis demonstrates that the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes has the potential for large-scale, region-wide, actual and efficiency savings to the taxpayer.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Improved decision making for both environmental impacts and financing of national, regional and local coastal protection schemes and initiatives.

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. None arising directly from this report

## **11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. None arising directly from this report

## **12. ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL'S COMMENTS**

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel supported the recommendations below.

## **13. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS**

The Portfolio Holder welcomes the report and supports the recommendations.

## **14. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 14.1. That the continued integration of the Southeast Regional Coastal Monitoring Programme into the National Network of Regional Monitoring Programmes be approved in principle;
- 14.2. That it be approved in principle that New Forest District Council will continue to act as the Lead Coordinating Authority in the development and management of Phase II of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes.
- 14.3. That it be approved in principle that New Forest District Council will continue to act as the Lead Authority in the application to the Environment Agency for funding of Phase II of the National Network of Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes.

### **Further Information**

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### **Background Papers:**

None