

CABINET

Update on the Management of Coastal Defences and Flooding

6th October 2009

Report of Report of Corporate Director (Regeneration)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update members on the current coastal and flood defence issues and arrangements for grant funding by central government. To endorse that the city council continues to work with all agencies to sustain and improve our coastal and flood defences.
2. To consider the offer of funding for the investigation of flooding at Hest Bank Lane, Slyne.
3. To update members on the revision of the Shoreline Management Plan and the important opportunity to influence the plan during its public consultation.

Key Decision

X

Non-Key Decision

Referral from Cabinet Member

Date Included in Forward Plan

22 September 2009

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR Jon Barry

- (1) Members are asked to note the revised funding arrangements for coastal and flood defences and endorse that we continue to work with all agencies to sustain and improve our current defences in line with the councils existing budgetary framework and approvals processes.
- (2) Members are asked to accept the funding of £45,000 from the Environment Agency (EA) for the investigation of flooding at Hest Bank Lane, Slyne, and that the General Fund Capital Programme is updated accordingly, subject to there being a nil impact on the Council's resources.
- (3) Members are asked to note the public consultation phase of the revision of the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2). This gives members the opportunity to participate in the consultation and the chance to influence the outcome of this important plan which will shape the future management of Lancaster's coastline.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Changes have occurred in the way in which central government is managing the risk of flooding both on the coast and inland. This report outlines the current impact on Lancaster City Council

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 Coastal defences

The responsibility from central government for strategic overview of coastal erosion has now passed from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to the Environment Agency (EA). The city council has for many years negotiated its capital programme for coastal defences from DEFRA but the administration of grants for coastal defences is now administered by the EA.

The Morecambe Coastal Works Comprehensive Scheme (MCWCS) which started in 1989 has recently been completed by the £13m contract for the construction of the defences at Sandylands and the importation of sand and cobbles along the Morecambe frontage. However there is still a need to continue to manage our flood and coastal defences to protect the properties within our district from the type of devastation caused by the storms that occurred in 1977, 1983 and to a lesser extent in 1990.

The wave reflection wall which preceded the MCWCS commenced construction in the early 1980's and the first phase at the Happy Mount end of the promenade is approaching 30 years of age. The condition of the concrete has caused some concern which resulted in a study into the condition of the wave reflection wall. The study indicated that there has been a chemical reaction within the concrete which has led to some deterioration. Whilst this is not deemed to be critical at the moment it cannot be relied upon as a long term feature of our defences and a program of replacement or refurbishment of this feature will need to be undertaken to maintain the standard of our sea defences in the long term. Whilst a huge investment has been made with primary sea defences in the last twenty years the wave reflection wall is an essential component which provides protection against tidal flooding for thousands of properties in Morecambe.

The EA have granted funds to investigate the options for the refurbishment of the wall which has been allocated for this financial year and are already included in the council's five year capital programme. It is expected that this will produce the justification for a programme of capital schemes to replace this element of our coastal defences. Once this report is available we should be in a position to apply for funding through the EA. Details of the mechanisms for gaining funding are provided later in this report.

2.2 Land drainage

The district also has some known flooding problems which are not as a result of tidal or Main River flooding. Several new initiatives are planned to be implemented by the government, particularly with respect to surface water flooding, as a result of the Pitt Report which recommends changes to the responsibilities of local authorities in these areas of operation. The legislation required for these changes will be contained in the Flood and Water Bill (FWB) which is expected to go to Parliament later this year.

In anticipation of the enactment of the FWB meetings are to take place in the autumn with

Lancashire County Council as the draft bill nominated the upper tier authorities to manage the new responsibilities under the FWB. Recommendations were made in the draft bill that partnerships with district authorities are formed to deliver these new responsibilities. These non coastal flooding issues are often far more complex and more difficult to progress due to the overlapping responsibilities of the different organisations involved. The Council has already carried out similar works at Millhead in Warton, which are nearing completion, and has provided for works at Artle Beck, subject to the EA granting funding and approval to proceed.

As these new initiatives develop there may be some opportunities to apply for grant from the EA when certain criteria are met. As an example the EA has granted the authority £45,000 to investigate the flooding problems at Hest Bank Lane, Slyne as there is a possible coordination with the construction of the M6 link which could give a unique opportunity for a practical and economic solution. This problem has been championed by a residents group in conjunction with the Parish Council, which is maintaining a high profile for this flooding risk.

2.3 Capital Schemes Grant Process with EA

This process requires authorities to submit annual bids for funding with comprehensive financial, technical and environmental information so that a national priority can be determined. In order to assist authorities in gathering the information in the form of a Project Appraisal Report (PAR) funding for studies are available to acquire the information to produce the PAR.

All the projects are nationally assessed on a risk based process and a national Sanctioned List (SL) for each financial year is produced by the Environment Agency. This allocates grant money for the study or capital scheme but is not the final capital approval. Once there has been an allocation in the SL detailed approval has to be obtained via the Environment Agency before money is released.

On schemes up to £50,000 a submission is made to the EA Regional Flood Risk Manager. Between £50k and £2m a submission has to be made to the EA Regional Project Evaluation Board (PAB).

Over £2m a submission is made to the National Review Group (NRG).

For both the PAB and the NRG a representative of the local authority attends the appraisal to answer questions on the submission.

The grant allocation made on these schemes is for 100% of the approved costs and although does not require any match funding by the city council, there could be some ineligible capital costs relating to staff time which the council would have to finance itself and are not currently provided for. This would vary depending on the nature and size of each scheme and funding availability would need to be reviewed on a case by case basis.

As the EA have only recently become responsible for these processes some changes to the operation of these procedures are occurring as the systems become established. If any of these changes are significant a further report to Cabinet may be required

2.4 Shoreline Management Plan

Introduction

The first Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) was put in place in 1999. This document examined the coastline and divided it into management units (MU's) depending on their

geography and character. Each individual MU was then examined to determine the appropriate management regime for that length of coastline. The first generation SMPs were both innovative and a big step forward towards better understanding of our coastline and the need for strategic planning.

Central government have decided that the SMP is now due for review to ensure full account is taken of latest information and challenges, including climate change. The government has clearly stated that the coastline recedes or advances with changes in current, wind and tide and it would be unrealistic to expect to maintain the coastline in all places as it is now. SMP2 is therefore tasked with looking at a range of options and to avoid burdening future generations with the cost of maintaining unsustainable defences.

SMP2 is being promoted and funded nationally by DEFRA to assist in the long term planning of the management of our coastline with the respect to the government public strategy on coastal defences titled “Making Space for Water”. The coastal management policies adopted within SMP2 will have a substantial impact on where and how the EA distributes its coastal defence budget for the foreseeable future. The adopted SMP2 along with the Catchment Flood Management Plan’s which were published in 2008 will influence future planning policy on coastal and river catchment areas of the district. It is inevitable within these processes that the aspirations of all stakeholders will not be met resulting in some individuals being dissatisfied with the recommended policies.

Members may recall receiving information on the Shoreline Management Plan review (SMP2) previously with an invitation to attend a stakeholder/members forum. This report is to inform members that the public phase of the consultation of the recommended policies for each MU is to commence in October for a period of three months.

The SMP2’s are being developed by consultants Halcrow Group Ltd, on behalf of the North West England and North Wales Coastal Group – a partnership between the Environment Agency (EA), Maritime Local Authorities and other interested organisations. It covers the coastline between the Solway Firth and Gt. Ormes Head, known as Cell 11. Blackpool Council is the lead authority responsible for managing the contract, overseen by a Project Management Board comprised representatives of the Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and Coastal Group Chairs. The project is funded directly by central government and administered by the EA.

Shoreline management Plan Review Principals

SMP2 will set coastal defence policies for three time ‘epochs’:

- 0 to 20 years short term
- 20 to 50 years medium term
- 50 to 100 years long term

For each of these time-spans 1 of 4 policies will be chosen for each length of coast:

Advance the line	Build a new defence on the seaward side of the current defence
Hold the line	Maintain the defence on the existing location
No active intervention	Allow the coastline to evolve naturally
Managed re-alignment	Build a new defence landward of the existing and take measures to allow tidal waters on the land in-between

Obviously where the latter two designations are made there is a strong chance of not meeting some stakeholders' aspirations.

SMP Study Area

Cell 11 covers the coastline from Gt. Ormes Head in North Wales to the Solway Firth on the Scottish border. To facilitate project management and encourage local participation, the cell is split into five sub-cells (Table 1). The plans consider estuaries and generally extend to the normal limit of tidal influence.

Table 1.

Sub-cell	Coastline
11a	Gt. Ormes Head to Southport
11b	Southport to Wyre Estuary
11c	Wyre Estuary to Hodbarrow Pt.
11d	Hodbarrow Pt. to St. Bees Head
11e	St. Bees Head to Solway Firth

Progress to date

The development of SMP2 has 6 main stages:

- Scope the SMP
- Assessments to Support Policy Development
- Policy Development
- Public Examination
- Finalise Plan
- Plan Dissemination

The review of all five SMP2s in Cell 11 began in January 2008. Stage 3 – 'Policy Development' is now complete and 'likely preferred policies' over the three time epochs were published in June 2009 and have been amended following consultation with stakeholders and members at events held in June this year.

The preferred policies were derived using a policy scenario approach. This involves testing the consequences of adopting a particular policy for a stretch of coast. It estimates the likely form and predicted position of the shoreline for the three epochs under each policy.

Other assessments include sensitivity testing to highlight any uncertainties of risks which may affect the policy decision (e.g. climate change). Further assessments are underway to ensure the plans conform to other regulatory provisions such as the Habitats Regulations and the Water Framework Directive. The outcomes of each policy have been reviewed to consider which combination of policies represents the best approach to meet objectives throughout the whole coastline.

Communication and Consultation

Several methods are being used to consult a wide and comprehensive range of stakeholders. Stakeholder Forums were held in September 2008, December 2008 and June 2009. These forums were supported by Client Steering Group meetings and requests for public involvement through newspaper advertisements, leaflets and web-based consultation.

A formal 3-month public consultation on the draft policies is scheduled to commence in October 2009. A variety of communication methods will be undertaken to consult on the draft SMP2 document. A communication plan is being drawn up which will include information provided through the following: -

- North West Coastal Group website - www.mycoastline.org
- Presentations to interested groups
- Press releases in local papers
- Further local stake holder workshops

SMP2 Adoption and Approval

Under the strategic overview for the coast, the national SMP2 programme is managed by the EA. Each plan will be reviewed by the EA's SMP2 Quality Review Group to check quality and consistency nationally.

Table 2 shows key dates in the adoption and approval of the programme.

Table 2.

Date	Action
Sept-09	This report to Members to advise of SMP2 process and public consultation
Oct-09 to Dec-09	Public examination of draft SMP2 policies
Jan-10	Report outcomes of consultation to Project Board
Feb-10	Revision of draft policies to account for consultation
March-10	Seek Local Authority adoption of SMP2
Jun-10	Regional Director sign-off

Before the SMP2 is signed-off by the EA Regional Director, approval and adoption will be sought by all participating Local Authorities. Failure of operating authorities to engage with and adopt the SMP2 may jeopardise future capital grant aid funding for flood and coastal defence works and could lead to inappropriate policy options on the management of our coastline.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 Consultation with the Environment Agency on coastal and flooding matters takes place on a regular basis.

3.2 Consultation on the SMP process to date has been carried out with the assistance of the contracted consultant Halcrow and by cooperation between local authorities and various agencies. These include the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and a large range of identified stakeholders.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Revised arrangements for coastal and flood defence grants

- 4.1 The council note the EA's revised arrangements for the application for Coastal and flood defence grant funding and endorse that the council continues to work with all relevant agencies to sustain and improve our current defences in line with the councils existing budgetary framework and approvals processes. The grant available is for 100% of approved costs and requires no match funding, although there may be costs to the council relating to staff time, as advised previously in the report.
- 4.2 Not to continue with grant applications for flood and coastal defences. This will diminish the ability for the council to meet the predicted increasing risk from these events.

Grant offer of £45,000 from the EA for the investigation of flooding at Hest Bank Lane, Slyne.

- 4.3 That the grant offer be accepted to investigate a possible solution to the flooding risk.
- 4.4 That the grant offer be rejected which would mean no immediate progress, at minimal cost to the council, will be made on this matter and there could be a loss of confidence in the councils ability to address these issues. In addition, the flooding problems at Hest Bank Lane would still need to be resolved and it is likely that the council would have to provide some financial input.

Shoreline Management Plan

- 4.5 That members note the opportunity to participate in the consultation on the revised Shoreline Management Plan and officers of the council continue to work with the North West Coastal Groups to finalise the proposals for SMP2 and report back on the outcomes of the public consultation relative to the Lancaster coastline.
- 4.6 That the opportunity for members to participate is not taken up and the chance to comment on or influence the final plan would be missed.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 Revised arrangements for coastal and flood defence grants

The officers preferred option is 4.1 to continue working with all agencies to enhance our coastal and flood defences to the benefits our residents.

5.2 Grant of £45,000 from the EA for the investigation of flooding at Hest Bank Lane

The officer's recommendation is 4.3 to take this opportunity to investigate a possible solution to the flooding risk for residents in the vicinity of Hest Bank Lane.

5.3 Shoreline Management Plan

The officer's recommendation is 4.5 as this is an important step in the future management of our coastline and will be an important factor in the determination of support that the council will receive from central government on coastal defence issues.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Coastal defences and flooding will continue to be a high profile issue in Lancaster due to its geographical features. A great deal of work has been carried over the last thirty years' with the construction of capital schemes and monitoring of defences. These actions have greatly improved the districts resilience to flooding. With the current concerns on climate change it is important to continue to be proactive in the management of these issues. The recommended options will continue the positive management of the risks from coastal erosion and flooding.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Policy nos.

- 12. Improve economic prosperity throughout the Lancaster district.
- 18. An improved quality of life for those who live, work in and visit the Lancaster District

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

This report raises no implications

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial implications arising from option 5.1 but if the Council does not note the revised procedures for grant application to the EA, there could be a loss of future external funding.

With respect to option 5.3, the cost of investigation of flooding at Hest Bank Lane, Slyne will be met from the EA grant offer of £45,000. It is estimated that costs for staff capital salaries will be no more than £5,000, of which £1,000 would not be eligible for grant funding, and would need to be financed by the city council. It is anticipated that this could be met from existing provision within the capital programme for capital salaries and so will have no impact on the Council's resources. Alternatively savings could be identified from within existing land drainage revenue budgets. The council's capital programme and, where applicable, revenue budgets would need to be updated to reflect this.

Again, there are no immediate financial implications arising from option 5.5 but, long term, adoption of the SMP2 will be required to gain grant assistance with respect to coastal defence issues and it is in the Council's interests to engage with the consultation process. As for option 5.1, not approving option 5.5 could result in loss of future external grants for the district.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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