

CABINET

Adoption of the Shoreline Management Plan for North West England and North Wales

**9 November 2010
(Deferred from 5 October 2010)**

Report of the Head of Regeneration and Policy

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To consider the adoption of the revised Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2)			
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	April 2010		
This report is public.			

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR JON BARRY

Recommendations to follow at cabinet.

1.0 Introduction

Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) are part of the government Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management planning framework. The SMP sets the long term policy for the management of the coast and is taken forward through shoreline strategies and schemes. The SMP is a high level strategic document which sets out the broad principles and will be used to assist in the determination of priorities for future funding. Where applicable more detailed strategy studies will be undertaken and these may then lead on to definitive coastal defence projects.

This is the first review of the SMP that was adopted over 10 years ago and the review was started in 2008. Lancaster is part of Coastal Cell 11, which runs from Great Ormes Head in Llandudno to the Scottish Border in the Solway Firth, and in this review there is one SMP2 for the whole length, including the many large estuaries.

It is important that the partner coastal authorities adopt the plan in unison because it will influence the level and consistency of funding provided to them to undertake coastal defence works and to maintain existing defences.

As part of the North West England and North Wales Coastal Group (NWNWCG), Blackpool Council was nominated to take the lead on procuring a consultant to undertake the SMP2 and managing the SMP2 process on behalf of all the Coastal Authorities and the Environment Agency. Blackpool Council gained funding from Defra (now administered through the Environment Agency) to undertake the SMP2 for the English coastline and Conwy County Borough Council gained funding from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) for the Welsh coastline. Following a tender procedure Blackpool Council contracted with Halcrow Group consultants to assist with production of the SMP2. Lancaster City Council had officer representation on the project board for the SMP2 throughout the process.

The SMP2 has been undertaken in stages in accordance with the Defra 2006 guidance, which is supported by WAG.

The guidance gives four possible policy options:

Hold the Line	maintain the existing coastline position
Advance the line	move the line forward
Managed Realignment	manage the movement of the coastline either landward or seaward
No Active Intervention	No significant public money put into management of the coastline.

The guidance states that a policy needs to be assigned to lengths of coastline over 100 years in three time epochs:

Short term	0-20 years
Medium term	20-50 years
Long term	50-100 years

2.0 Proposal and Impact on Lancaster Coastline

As can be seen in the table below Lancaster City Council has a variety of management options included over its length of coastline. The detailed consultations have brought out some concerns from residents of certain areas some of which Members will already be aware of from direct communication from residents. The main document is Appendix 1, available separately, but a summary of the policies for the Lancaster coastline is illustrated in the table below:-

Policy Unit	Location	Policy Period - Years		
		0-20	20-50	50-100
2.3	Fluke Hall to Cocker Bridge	HTL	MR or HTL	HTL
2.4	Cocker Bridge to Glasson Dock	HTL	MR or HTL	MR or HTL
3.1	Glasson Dock to Condor Green Farm	HTL	HTL	HTL
3.2	Conder Green Farm to Aldcliffe	NAI	NAI	NAI
3.3	Aldcliffe to Freemans Wood (Aldcliffe Marsh)	NAI	NAI	NAI
3.4	Freemans Wood to Skerton Weir	HTL	HTL	HTL
3.5	Lythe Bridge to Riverside Farm	HTL	MR	HTL
3.6	Riverside Farm to Overton cattle grid	NAI	NAI	NAI
3.7	Overton Cattle Grid to Sunderland Village	HTL	HTL	MR
4.1	Sunderland Village to Potts Corner	NAI	NAI	NAI
4.2	Sunderland Point	MR	MR	MR
4.3	Sunderland Point to secondary Embankment	NAI	NAI	NAI
4.4	secondary Embankment to Potts Corner	HTL	HTL	HTL
5.1	Heysham Power Station to Heysham Dock	NAI	NAI	NAI
5.2	Potts Corner to Heysham Power Station	HTL	HTL	HTL
6.1	South End of Half Moon Bay to Chapel Hill, Heysham	NAI	NAI	NAI
6.2	Chapel Hill, Heysham to Hest Bank	HTL	HTL	HTL
7.1	Hest Bank to Sewage Works	HTL	MR	HTL
7.2	Sewage Works to Red Bank Farm	NAI	NAI	NAI
7.3	Red Bank Farm to Bolton-le-Sands Caravan Park	HTL	MR	HTL
7.4	Bolton-le-Sands Caravan Park to River Keer	NAI	NAI	NAI
7.5	River Keer to Heald Brow	NAI	NAI	NAI
8.1	Heald Brow to Frith Wood	NAI	NAI	NAI

Obviously “Hold the Line” (HTL), throughout the three epochs, green in the table, causes no problems for the public. The majority of these lengths of coastline are the responsibility of Lancaster City Council or the Environment Agency with a few short lengths in the ownership of St. Peters Church, Heysham and the railway.

It should be noted that whilst there may be a policy of HTL the responsibility for the defence is still the owner of the land.

The “No active intervention” (NAI) is causing concern in the Sunderland Point area and representatives of the community are disputing the allocation of these policies. However the national guidelines under which these policies are being implemented have been fully explored by the consultants, and the project board of the NWNWCG. During the consultation period in response to concerns of residents it was agreed to further subdivide the lengths of coastline in order to isolate the “point” of Sunderland Point and give it a managed realignment (MR) policy rather than NAI. This allows for

the possibility of studies into the effect that erosion of the point has on the River Lune, but a funding source would have to be obtained.

In general the NAI areas have identified lengths of coastline where the benefits of constructing a defence are outweighed by the costs. Schemes which attract funding for grant, which are chosen on a priority basis nationally, usually have a cost benefit ratio close to ten. So whilst this process has brought to the public attention that certain areas would not be economically viable to protect it has not changed the status quo, only the public knowledge of this fact.

The “managed realignment” policy has caused a great deal of concern in the Thurnham and Cockerham Area. This area is complicated by residents being of the opinion that the Environment Agency should honour an agreement, that residents claim they inherited from the River Lune Catchment Board in 1949, to maintain the defences. The Environment Agency believes that they do not have any obligations and the responsibility lies with the individual landowners.

Members have received direct communications from representatives and individuals from this area .A great deal of detailed consultation has taken place with representatives from these areas which has resulted in a change to the policy for the second epoch. This is now a hybrid policy of HTL or MR depending on studies which will be undertaken in the first epoch. There is also a commitment from the EA to work closely with the residents to explore the future options which will include officers from the City Council.

With the exception of Sunderland Point which is a special case, due to possible impacts on the Lune Estuary, areas within this SMP2 which have been identified as possible managed realignment sites have been designated as HTL for the first epoch (20 years). This will allow studies to take place to determine their suitability, the full impact and the economics of the proposals.

Whilst certain residents are not satisfied with the outcomes in the final report, officers from the various organisations involved, together with the consultants Halcrow have sought the best outcome available within the national parameters set by the government

Under the strategic overview for the coast, the national SMP2 programme is managed by the EA. This plan has been reviewed by the EA’s SMP2 Quality Review Group to check quality and consistency nationally.

The whole of this SMP from Llandudno to the Scottish Border will be submitted to the EA Regional Board for adoption mid October.

3.0 Details of Consultation

The draft SMP2 was published for public consultation from October 2009 to February 2010 with comments in some areas being allowed until the end of March 2010 responding to some criticisms about the consultation process. The draft SMP2 was available at various council buildings along the coastline and press releases were issued from each council to advertise the public consultation. In addition all of the documents were available on the Coastal Group website at www.mycoastline.org . There were also public meetings and more local meetings to discuss the draft plan with stakeholders and the public.

Both the process to be undertaken and the implications of the SMP were presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9th December 2009

It has to be acknowledged that there were difficulties in engaging local communities with the process. This was probably due in part to consultation fatigue in many communities with a whole raft of policies and strategies over a similar period. Ironically the eventual raising of criticisms by some communities who realised the extent to which they were affected did more to stimulate engagement than the various efforts to consult in the first place.

Arrangements are in place for a continued dialogue with residents of the most sensitive areas of Sunderland Point and Thurnham.

All the comments that were received were reviewed by the project team to assess whether changes needed to be made to the draft plan. The consultant has amended the documentation and has written a consultation report which contains all the comments and any subsequent changes to the SMP2. This consultation report has been published on the Coastal Group website for Stakeholders to see. A copy of the relevant parts of this report is included in Appendix 2, available separately.

The SMP2 will have to undergo a Habitats Regulations assessment to assess the impacts on European designate habitats. If there is likely to be an adverse impact on a European site then the SMP will need to go to the Secretary of State to be approved. This is not expected to have any impact on the proposed policies on the Lancaster Coastline.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (Including risk assessment)

4.1 Option 1

Members are asked to formally adopt the revised Shoreline Management Plan as a risk management tool for the sustainable management of our coastline.

Whilst there is concern in some communities about the policies being adopted the best available solution has been obtained for these areas within the national parameters laid down by the government. The SMP2 is the major risk management tool that is being used by central government to allocate priorities for funding of coastal defence works. Lancaster City Council has in the past relied heavily on access to government grants to protect itself from major coastal flooding. Whilst a great deal of work has already been completed which has reduced this risk there is still a need for further work to maintain and enhance the existing defences which will maintain the level of protection recently achieved. A programme of works to replace the existing Wave Reflection Wall, built in the early eighties, which whilst currently serviceable has suffered some deterioration is programmed over the next few years subject to final approvals. Access to such funds is likely to be at risk if this strategic management tool is not adopted by Lancaster City Council.

In those areas of controversy where the prospect of managed retreat could threaten the current status quo there is a commitment to hold the line for now and review the approach before the next revision of the plan. For this reason support is recommended at this time.

4.2 Option 2

Members may choose not to adopt the plan. Non adoption will put at risk access to funds for any coastal or flooding related grants. Lancaster City Council currently has

allocations in its capital programme which are still subject to final grant approval which may be at risk if non adoption is chosen. This Council can only operate as the local responsible body for Coastal defences if it is adequately funded by the Environment agency and working in partnership with the North West Coastal Group. Failure to adopt the plan could prejudice this.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

The officer's recommendation is 4.1as this is an important aid to the future management of our coastline and will be an important factor in the determination of financial support that the council will receive from central government on coastal defence and flooding issues.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

A sustainably managed coast is an essential element in the long term economic regeneration and assists in the adaptation to climate change.
Partnership working with other agencies and local authorities is important to maintain coherent policies across boundaries.
The SMP2 will feed into the Local Development Framework for Lancaster

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

This report raises no implications

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Non adoption of the SMP2 by the City Council could have a negative impact on future bids for funding and the future level of support the Council receives from Central Government, if seen to be unsupportive of what the Government has identified as priority. Of the projects in the Council's Approved Capital Programme, the £2,018M Wave Reflection Wall Project from 2010/11 to 2013/14 is the only one awaiting full EA approval and could also be at risk if the plan is not adopted.

The SMP2 is underpinned by an action plan which identifies areas requiring further study to quantify the level of works needed. It has not yet been determined whether the EA or Council would undertake these studies but any capital works would be fully externally funded, aside from a small percentage of capital salaries which would need to be met from City Council resources. This cost to the Council would need be calculated and reported back on a scheme by scheme basis for approval.

Government is currently consulting on changes to the basis on which financial support for the maintenance of sea and river defences should be distributed, as well consulting on proposals regarding the funding of responsibilities arising from the Flood and Water Management Act, under which the Council will have a duty to cooperate with the lead flood authority with respect to Surface Water Management Plans for this area, i.e. the County Council. Whilst the proposals are not expected to have any direct bearing on the adoption of

the SMP, the outcome of the consultation on the distribution financial support to help meet the costs of maintaining sea and river defences could well affect the Council. This was highlighted in the financial strategy update report to Cabinet in August. Any such financial implications would also be addressed in future reports to Cabinet, on a scheme by scheme basis

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted. The Council's role in coast protection involves comparatively small financial investment from its own resources, but nonetheless the Council needs to ensure that any revenue and capital implications arising from progressing the SMP are factored into its spending plans.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Available separately
Appendix 1 Lancaster SMP2 Policies.pdf
Appendix 2 Lancaster Consultation
Extract.pdf
Appendix 3 Lancaster SMP2 text.pdf

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