

**COASTAL GROUPS
IN
ENGLAND**

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**THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY STRATEGIC
OVERVIEW OF SEA FLOODING AND COASTAL
EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT**

MARCH 2008

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 On 22 June 2007, the former Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Ian Pearson, announced the new arrangements for the Environment Agency's overview role on the future management of coastal erosion and sea flooding in England. The Minister's announcement included a statement on the proposed arrangements for the coastal strategic overview; the relevant sections are in Appendices 1 & 2. Under its Strategic Overview role, the Environment Agency will

- take the lead for all sea flooding risk in England, and fund and oversee coastal erosion works undertaken by local authorities.
- ensure that sustainable long-term SMPs are in place for the English coastline.
- work with local authorities to ensure that the resulting flood and coastal erosion works are properly planned, prioritised, procured, completed and maintained to get the best value for the public purse.
- ensure that third party defences are sustainable.

1.2 The statement included the intention that coastal groups should become more strategic and play a stronger role in the future planning of flood and coastal erosion risk management. In addition, coastal groups would advise EA and be represented on RFDCs. Defra agreed to work with Coastal Groups and the Environment Agency to develop arrangements for:

- Fewer, bigger and more strategic groups.
- A review of Coastal Group boundaries having regard to River Basin Management Plans.
- Clear and consistent terms of reference and membership.
- Coastal Groups influencing the annual programme of works via the RFDCs.
- Consistent and strong Environment Agency input.

As part of the above, Coastal Groups' would:

- be advisory to the EA.
- extend a standing invitation to RFDC chairs or nominated representatives to attend the coastal groups.
- recommend to the EA and LAs who is best placed to undertake Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) and contribute their expertise to SMP production.
- collectively meet Defra, RFDC Chairmen and EA to influence national level policy and implementation.

1.3 Prior to consultation on the future arrangements for Coastal Groups, outline thoughts were discussed within a number of forums and principally with RFDC Chairs, Coastal Group Chairs, Local Authority Officers and Environment Agency officers. This report takes account of these early outline thoughts together with formal responses received at the end of January 2008 from a wide range of stakeholders engaged through members of the Coastal Strategic Overview Project Management Group.

1.4 This report provides conclusions and recommendations on the governance and administration arrangements for strategic Coastal Groups in England. It also gives due consideration of arrangements in the devolved Governments of Wales and Scotland. This report deals specifically with the terms of reference, boundaries, membership and relationship with RFDCs and resources for Coastal Groups.

1.5 This report also proposes that implementation of strategic Coastal Groups should commence from 1st April 2008 and be effective by October 2008.

2.0 COASTAL GROUPS – TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Introduction

Whilst covering relatively small stretches of coastline, the existing coastal groups nevertheless provide an excellent service and make a valuable contribution to managing coastal risks. However, with the advent of fewer, more strategic coastal groups in future there is an opportunity to provide a clear meaningful name that will be easily identified and meaningful to the public. It is **concluded** that the name of each coastal group should be based on broad regional geographic descriptions such as e.g. “South East Coastal Group”. The names of the more strategic coastal groups are described Section 3 below. However, some original coastal group names such as SCOPAC should not be lost and there are opportunities to retain such identities through other coastal fora, perhaps where elected members may be involved.

The Coastal Group Terms of Reference are intended to promote the Coastal Groups as centres of excellence, ensuring that they maintain their largely technical base and encourage engagement with a full range of stakeholders. As such Coastal Groups will be primarily an advisory body having no statutory or executive function; but they will be a key influencer, working closely with the Environment Agency, to attend and advise RFDCs and Defra on optimal coastal risk management.

2.2 It is **recommended** that the terms of reference for strategic coastal groups should be based around a core set of generic terms of reference that are nationally consistent. Additional secondary terms of reference can be added should individual coastal groups wish to be inclusive of specific local issues.

Generic – Terms of Reference

Name

The Group shall be called the Coastal Group.

Aim

To give sound advice on coastal issues and be a strong influencer in optimising strategic and sustainable policies, plans and programmes to best manage the risk from sea flooding and coastal erosion. To be a natural and chosen forum for coastal practitioners to discuss problems and share best practice. To be efficient in operation and provide best value for the public purse.

Principal Objectives

- As a technical group principally comprising of coastal managers, and operating in a strategic context, to be a source of expertise on the coast and to advise and influence the RFDC on matters relating to the coast.
- To contribute to the EA’s preparation and implementation of a long term investment strategy for the management of flood and erosion risks,

including both long term plans and delivery of annual programmes of works and maintenance.

Secondary Objectives

- Recommend to the Environment Agency who is best placed to undertake the lead for individual SMPs and work with others towards Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).
- To identify, develop and share best practice with regard to procurement, delivery, and general management of sea flooding and coast erosion risk. To influence members to adopt best practice.
- To encourage the development of a co-ordinated approach to the collection and storage of data relevant to the effective management of risks at the shoreline.
- Through discussion with Defra, RFDC Chairs and the EA, to ensure the views of member organisations are considered in the development and implementation of national policies and initiatives relating to the management of flood and erosion risks at the coastline.
- To work closely with adjacent Coastal Groups and the Environment Agency's Regional Flood Defence Committees in advising on managing floods and erosion risks at the shoreline.
- To advise upon research and development needs within the region in relation to issues of coastal engineering, shoreline management, coastal management and monitoring.
- To act as a forum for coastal managers within the maritime authorities, the EA and others within the region.
- To share expertise and examples of best practice between Group members and to share resources between member organisations when mutually acceptable and advantageous.
- To continue development of regional strategic coastal monitoring programmes and work with the Environment Agency towards creation of a coordinated and integrated national strategic coastal monitoring programme.

3.0 COASTAL GROUPS - BOUNDARIES

A strategy for managing, and where appropriate, defending the coastline, should reflect the importance of sediment transport along beaches and nearshore seabed. Littoral drift divides usually occur at a point where the orientation of the coast changes abruptly. Actions one side of a drift divide will generally not cause problems on the other. Sediment sinks occur at points where sediment transport paths meet such as sheltered areas and are often located in tidal inlets and estuaries.

The concept of coastal cells and the importance of longshore sediment transport have been long recognised by coastal managers as a basis for appropriate coastal management. However, existing coastal group boundaries are based on a mix of political and administrative boundaries and coastal process sub-cells with occasional overlaps.

Analysis of consultations response clearly preferred a consistent approach based on coastal process boundaries and that the "Mapping of Littoral Cells as proposed by HR Wallingford - Motyka & Brampton - Report SR328 - January 1993, forms the most rational approach to establishing strategic coastal group boundaries. Such an approach is consistent with the existing SMP boundaries which were defined by coastal processes sub-cells (see maps at Appendix 3).

Based on assessment of consultation responses it is **concluded** that 7 strategic coastal groups in England should be formed based on coastal processes (see maps at Appendix 3). Taking account of the earlier conclusion that the name of each coastal group should be based on broad regional geographic descriptions, the following groups are formed with immediate effect.

North East Coastal Group
East Anglia Coastal Group
South East Coastal Group
Southern Coastal Group
South West Coastal Group
Severn Estuary Coastal Group
North West Coastal Group

These coastal group boundaries are not coincident with national boundaries and, following the coastal process principles described above, the strategic groups will need to consider issues beyond the English borders. Both Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Government operate similar advisory and partnership groups relating to marine and coastal issues to those in England. It is therefore expected that strategic coastal groups will engage with colleagues across national borders and extend an open invitation and inclusion to colleagues in Wales and Scotland.

The schedule below describes the boundaries of strategic coastal groups, how the original coastal groups fit within these new boundaries, and whether general oversight is by Defra, Welsh Assembly Government, or shared.

<u>Name of Strategic Coastal Group</u>	<u>Boundaries</u>	<u>Original Coastal Groups to be combined to form new strategic coastal group</u>
North East Coastal Group [oversight shared between Defra and Scottish Government]	St Abb's Head to Gibraltar Point	Northumbrian Coastal Group North East Coastal Authorities Group Humber Estuary Coastal Authorities Group
East Anglia Coastal Group [Defra oversight]	Gibraltar Point to Thames Barrier	Anglian Coastal Authorities Group
South East Coastal Group [Defra oversight]	Thames Barrier to Selsey Bill	South East Coastal Group South Downs Coastal Group
Southern Coastal Group [Defra oversight]	Selsey Bill to Portland Bill	SCOPAC
South West Coastal Group [Defra oversight]	Portland Bill to Hartland Point	South Devon and Dorset Coastal Group Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Coastal Group
Severn Estuary Coastal Group [oversight shared between Defra and Welsh Assembly Government]	Hartland Point to St Govan's Head	North Devon and Somerset Coastal Group Severn Estuary Coastal Group Swansea & Carmarthen Bay Coastal Engineering Group
The formation and oversight of coastal groups in Wales is a matter for Welsh Assembly Government.		Cardigan Bay Coastal Group Ynys Enlli to Llandudno Coastal Group
North West England & North Wales Coastal Group [oversight shared between Defra, Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Government]	Great Orme to Solway Firth	Liverpool Bay Coastal Group North Western Coastal Group

4.0 COASTAL GROUP - MEMBERSHIP

Membership of Coastal Groups will comprise of representatives from the following organisations and should be at an appropriate level and able to make decisions on behalf of the organisation they represent:

- a) Environment Agency (from the Region and Area within which the CG sits, a minimum of 2 seats)
- b) All maritime local authorities in CG area
- c) All County Councils in CG area
- d) Port Authorities in CG area
- e) Natural England
- f) Other key organisations with a responsibility for managing coastal defences

Other organisations may have a standing invitation or be invited to attend Coastal Group meetings as appropriate. Such organisations would, amongst others, include: EA Regional Flood Defence Committees, Ports and Marinas authorities or operators, English Heritage, Harbour Boards and the Ministry of Defence.

Voting

Each member shall be entitled to one vote. The chair and vice- chair have only one vote each.

Election of Officers

The Group will elect officers at an Annual Meeting to fill the posts of Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer from any member of the Coastal Group. These appointments will be for a period of three years. The role of Secretary is ideally undertaken by the Environment Agency to help ensure a strategic overview and reflect resource arrangements [see section 5]

Chair

The Chair shall lead the meetings of the Group and represent the Group, if required, at external meetings and on organisations such as those of Coastal Groups Chairs, the Environment Agency Regional Flood Defence Committee, the Coastal Defence Forum, etc. The Chair may delegate some or all of these tasks to a representative.

Vice Chair

The Vice Chair will support the Chair and deputise whenever necessary or appropriate.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall maintain a record of the accounts for the Group which are to be audited and agreed annually. The Treasurer will arrange for the issue of invoices and receipts, making of payments and each year make a report on the accounts to the Annual Meeting. Where the Environment Agency provides accommodation and administration of meetings; these will be met in full by the EA. The Accounts will

cover the costs associated with accommodation and administration of meetings when not provided by the EA. The Accounts may cover the expenses of the Chair or Vice Chair when attending meetings or representation on organisation described above. The involvement of officers will be at the cost of the relevant operating authority.

Secretary

The Secretary shall keep the minutes of each meeting of the Group and deal with correspondence on behalf of the Group.

Other Nominations

Authority may be given by the Group for other members to represent the Group on other outside bodies/groups.

Meetings

The Group will meet at least four times a year at dates and venues to be agreed at the Annual Meeting which is to be held in May each year. An annual report should be produced by each coastal group. Sub-Committees and sub-groups may be convened as appropriate to deal with specific issues such as SMP's, development of strategic plans and, development of an annual programme of works, etc.

Membership Fee

The Secretary, venues and administration costs shall normally be provided by the EA. The sponsoring authority for members will cover costs associated with attending meetings and travel. A membership fee or contributions from member authorities may be required to fund expenses of the Chair, small projects, etc. This will be a matter for the individual coastal group.

Elected Members

Elected members shall be invited to attend and observe the procedures of coastal groups.

5.0 COASTAL GROUP - RESOURCES

Coastal Groups as we know them today were established in the mid 1980s onwards as informal 'voluntary' groups which aimed to assist sustainable shoreline management through more effective dialogue and information exchange. The Groups have not received funding from central Government and have been resourced through a range of mechanisms generally involving membership contributions.

Currently, nearly all the coastal groups are led by an Operating Authority, usually with a forward works programme, which has recognised the value of playing a leading role in the promotion of sustainable shoreline management within the sub-cell. This has often meant that this leading Operating Authority has accepted an element of the professional and administrative costs of running the Coastal Group.

As the Coastal Groups have become more actively involved in the implementation of coastal defence policy and there has been increased inter-action at the national level (e.g. through the Defra Coastal Defence Forum, the Chairs of Coastal Groups and TAG), the need for a contribution towards the costs being incurred by the Chairman/Lead Authority has been increasingly recognised. This has resulted in varying levels of subscription from being less than £500 to over £3000, although the majority of higher levels of contribution are often driven by wider roles and interests such as local studies and research needs.

The terms of reference described earlier and the widening role of coastal groups suggests that some form of direct funding would be appropriate in order to enable full engagement and achieve the highest possible quality outputs.

It is **concluded** that coastal groups should have a core resource provided by the Environment Agency and that this should be supplemented by contributions by each of the other operating authorities in the group. Such resources should be made in terms of either funding or by providing a service such as representation at meetings, preparing a forward programme, etc. It will be a matter for each Coastal Group to prepare and agree an annual business plan and seek resources.

The EA are prepared to undertake the role of Secretary to reduce the financial burden on members, promote a consistent approach and also help facilitate the EA's Strategic Overview Role. In addition the EA are prepared to bear the costs of accommodation and administration for Coastal Group and by agreement undertake other roles. It is **recommended** that Coastal Groups give due consideration to this proposal.

It is concluded that each sponsoring authority for individual members covers the cost for attendance at the meetings of the Coastal Groups.

It is concluded that the sponsoring authorities for the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer covers the cost of them attending any additional meetings (e.g. Bi-annual National Coastal Forum, invite to RFDC meetings etc).

It is **recommended** that flexibility be given for any additional funds to be paid by the EA to the Coastal Groups to cover extra activities, if it can be shown that these bring an overall strategic benefit to the management of flood and erosion risk management on the coast.

6.0 COASTAL GROUPS – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COASTAL GROUPS AND REGIONAL FLOOD DEFENCE COMMITTEE (RFDC).

The Environment Act 1995 provides that each RFDC must consist of a chair and a number of other members appointed by the Secretary of State; two members appointed by the EA; and a number of members (sufficient to form a bare majority on the RFDC) appointed by or on behalf of constituent councils. None of the above shall be a member of the Environment Agency.

The democratic representation within the current RFDC is at County/Unitary level, not District, so the Committee does not include members from maritime district authorities (or inland district authorities). The scope to make changes to the RFDC without legislation is limited but there are proposals for a Bill although timing is still uncertain. It is therefore **concluded** that, in the interim, all operating authorities and stakeholders must work together to ensure that the Coastal Strategic Overview, as required by Minister of State, is undertaken using best endeavours and on an advisory basis.

From 1st April 2008, the RFDC, along with their other responsibilities will be required to take a strategic overview of all coastal issues which will include both coastal erosion and sea defence.

It is **concluded** that a standing invitation to attend strategic Coastal Group meetings should be extended to the RFDC Chair, or nominated representative. In return, the Coastal Group Chair, or nominated representative, and where appropriate other officers should be invited to attend Regional Flood Defence Committee meetings. Such invitations should ensure contribution to the EA's preparation and implementation of a long term investment strategy for the management of flood and erosion risks, including both long term plans and delivery of annual programmes of works and maintenance. It should also ensure a source of expertise on the coast and be able to advise and influence the RFDC on matters relating to the coast.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The decision on how Coastal Groups are to be formed, governed and operated comes from balancing a number of, often conflicting, concerns and issues. Judgement has been needed on what result will yield the best value to the public purse. Defra, the Environment Agency, Maritime Authorities and other key players (Natural England, Regional Government and Regional Assemblies) must come together to provide long term sustainable policies and plans based on sound science and risk management for the coast which deliver best value.

Appendix 1

Defra proposed arrangements for Coastal Groups
as part of the EASO on the Coast

Appendix 2

Defra proposed arrangements for RFDCs
as part of the EASO on the Coast

Appendix 3

Maps

- Littoral Cells
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- Shoreline Management Plans – 1st Generation
- Shoreline Management Plans – 2nd Generation
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- EA Strategic Overview of the Coast – Coastal Group in England