

Paper F

SOUTHERN REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE

New Bid for Local Levy

Item no.

Date:

Paper by: Lyall Cairns, Southern Coastal Group Chair

Subject: Local Levy Bid to support the delivery of the Southern Coastal Groups key priorities and to improve linkages between the SCG and the RFCC's.

Recommendation

RFCC members are asked to:

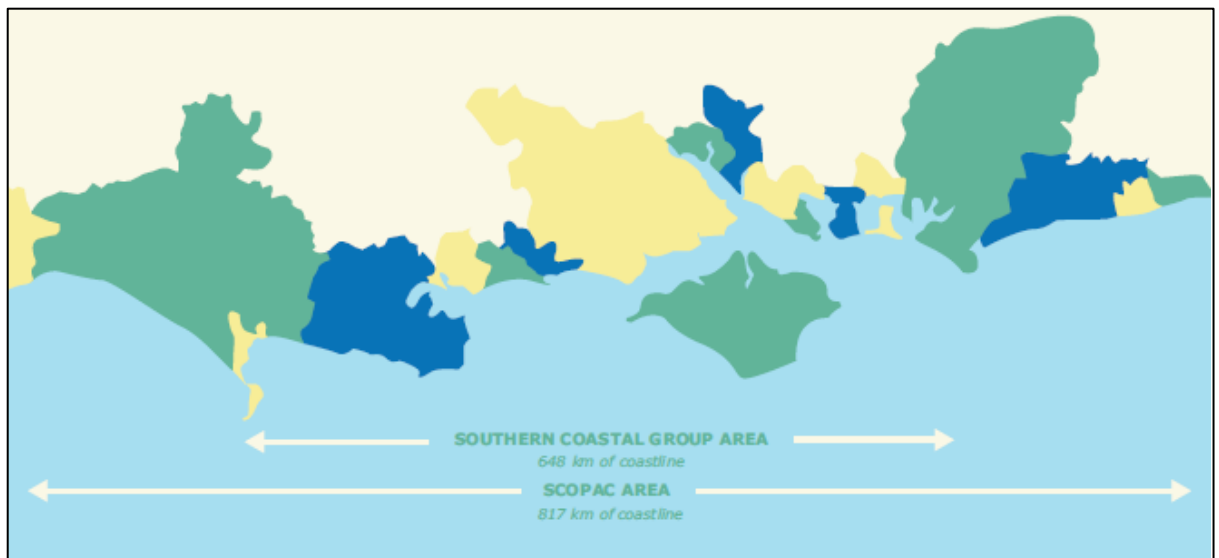
- Approve a bid of £115,000 (£23,000 per year for the next 5 years for the financial years 2020/21 - 2025/26) to support the delivery of the Southern Coastal Groups (SCG) function.
- Note that a local levy bid is also being made for the same amount to both the Southern RFCC and the Wessex RFCC, in light of the fact the SCG spans across 2 RFCC's.
- Note that this bid references the Southern RFCC Statement of Intent (2017-2021) and National RFCC Members Handbook (2015). This bid links the items for which funding are being sought to the RFCC purpose, priorities, objectives, commitments and principles rather than purely to 'Local Levy Principles'.

1.0 Background

- 1.1. This bid is in follow up to a successful bid made in 2018/19, which enabled the successful delivery of key SCG priorities to compliment the objectives and intent of the RFCC including - feeding into the SMP refresh process, update SMP action plans, hosting several training workshops for officers, feeding into the national FCERM Strategy consultation, engage in national policy discussions and more (see section 1.11).
- 1.2. This bid has the support of: Cllr Hugh Mason, Portsmouth City Councils representative on the SRFCC, Cllr Quantrill and Cllr Warwick, Hampshire County Council representatives on the SRFCC, and Cllr Mary Penfold, Dorset Council, SCOPAC Champion,
- 1.3. The Southern Coastal Group (SCG) and The Standing Conference on Problems

Associated with the Coastline (SCOPAC) are networks based in central southern England. They bring together neighbouring Local Authorities (LA) and organisations that are involved, or interested in, the management of the coastline.

- 1.4. The Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline held their first meeting in 1986 to share knowledge, collaborate for mutual benefit and take a more holistic approach to complex coastal issues without the limitations of Local Authority (LA) boundaries between Lyme Regis and Shoreham-by-Sea (see figure 1). This brought together LA's, the EA (previously NRA) and other organisations involved in managing the coastline inclusive of councillors and officers. SCOPAC subscriptions also enabled in excess of £1million of investment into innovative research into challenging technical issues faced along this coastline resulting in numerous outcomes that have shaped our sector.
- 1.5. The Southern Coastal Group (SCG) formed in September 2008 and is 1 of 7 strategic groups across the country, as prescribed by Defra. Working in an area between Portland Bill and Selsey Bill (see figure 1), this group is able to share issues and opportunities by bringing coastal managers from LA's, the Environment Agency and other coastal stakeholders together. Through this, officers are able to share best practice, influence local and national FCERM and realise efficiencies.



(Figure 1 – SCG and SCOPAC coverage)

- 1.6. SCOPAC and SCG have worked well alongside each other as separate “sister” organisations to meet the challenges of the day. However, recent pressure from climate change, austerity, the loss of experience as senior officers retire, loss of Hampshire County Council as a key organisation and devolution within Dorset has resulted in the groups reshaping and refreshing the way they operate.
- 1.7. Having considered many options to reshape the two groups have merged into a single group that retains the identity and branding of both.
- 1.8. The constitution will need to be amended accordingly but it is envisaged that based on the need for 2019/20 the Dorset LA's subscription will be circa £13k, Hampshire LA's circa £12k, Chichester circa £2k, Isle of Wight Council circa £2k and the Environment Agency £6k. It is envisaged that the LA's will negotiate between

themselves to decide how to agree the most equitable way to meet their spatially derived membership fee.

- 1.9. The subscription element of the group will be used to continue to fund the important research elements of SCOPAC which since it formed have enabled in excess of £1million of investment into innovative research into challenging technical issues faced along this coastline resulting in numerous outcomes that have shaped our sector.
- 1.10. The proposed change in approach means that the SCG will need to find funding to undertake the core activities of the group and its supporting delivery work items.
- 1.11. Working together, the SCG and SCOPAC have achieved significant benefits across the region. However, there are now a number of increasing pressures on coastal management which are threatening the wider sector. These include; climate change and sea level rise, public sector austerity and budget cuts, retirement of knowledgeable senior engineers and shifting policy and guidance
- 1.12. It is noted in the Southern RFCC Statement of Intent (2017-2021) that the RFCC intends to improve its links with Maritime Local Authorities and Coastal Groups to better address coastal flooding and erosion issues, and also ensure the Committee has an increased understanding of such matters.

It is also noted that the RFCC want to build stronger, sustained relationships with LLFAs, and other key partners, improving understanding of FCERM issues and how the Committee can support them to deliver their FCERM priorities including addressing staffing skills and resourcing issues.

- 1.13. As such in 2019 the Southern and Wessex RFCC's funded £23k each towards the core activities of the SCG to facilitate these links and focus on key priorities to compliment the objectives and intent of the RFCC.

To date this has enabled the SCG to

- Co-ordinate and update the SMP action plans for the group
- Be fully embedded in the national SMP-R process by attending theme advisory groups, workshops on planning, environment and funding and hosting workshops with planners and coastal engineers to discuss the local SMPs.
- To develop the SCG programme management tool to facilitate discussions around efficiency's on schemes across the region
- Co-ordinate maintenance activity best practice through information sharing and meetings
- Run an efficiency workshop with the Environment Agency to share best practice, bring to life the efficiency process and share examples with officers from across the region
- Lobby for national change to the partnership funding approach, attend key workshops on influencing the FCERM appraisal guidance, plan for a partnership funding workshop with the Environment Agency to help officers achieve funding for partnership projects (to be hosted in spring 2020)
- Facilitate the delivery and maintenance of the SCG professional services and minor works framework.
- Plan workshops to share best practice and information relating to the Regional Habitat Creation Programme and environmental enhancements in FCERM (to be hosted 28th March 2020)

- Represent the SCG in the National FCERM Strategy through attendance of workshops and seminars to ensure the Local Authority voice is integrated into the Strategy
- Feed into national consultations such as the Defra policy statement review and the National FCERM Strategy formal Consultation
- Support the SCG chair and deputies in attending key national meetings relating to FCERM
- Stay abreast of RFCC business and feedback to the wider coastal group network strengthening the links of the Coastal Groups with the RFCCs
- Support the hosting of the groups websites to ensure up to date information on research and FCERM is accessible

1.14. As such, the SCG are seeking follow up support from the RFCC's through a local levy bid.

2.0 The need for RFCC support to the SCG

2.1. The SCG have developed a detailed action plan to guide their work and maximise the benefits of the work they undertake. This operates on a prioritised basis. Many of the key priorities of the group will remain unfunded despite being crucial for the organisations involved in the coastal group unless the RFCC's can support the ongoing work of the group.

2.2. As such a local levy bid is seeking approval from the Southern and Wessex RFCC to support the continuation of the SCG and its ability to deliver its key priority actions.

2.3. The RFCC has previously considered/reflected upon how best it could support Local Authorities to deliver their large proportion of the current FCERM programme. The Coastal Groups provide the essential mechanism to bring together the County and District Councils and Unitary Authorities delivering the Programme on the coast, to exchange progress and invaluable experience, and increasing staff capability and expertise. The SCG can:

- Support Local Authorities to deliver their schemes in the Grant in Aid and Local Levy Programme and develop pipeline schemes.
- Avoid the potential isolation of staff delivering the FCERM programme in the Lower Tier Authorities, who do not have a seat on the RFCC, and who typically do not have a range of specialist officers in house, through essential coordination, including seeking efficiencies and exchanging expertise.
- Boost experience and expertise of staff leading on FCERM to reduce concerns over Local Authority delivery.
- Also bring together Local Authority and Environment Agency (technical) staff delivering the (evolving) FCERM Programme.

2.4. In April 2016 The North West RFCC approved the funding for a full time 5-year fixed term officer for the North West Coastal Group to oversee and maintain the SMP's for the region at a total cost of £200k (£40k per year). Whilst SMP oversight only forms part of this bid to the Southern and Wessex RFCC's, the principle behind this bid is the same; a need for financial support to undertake the core work of the SCG.

2.5. Instead of delivering the activities identified in this bid through 1 officer post, the SCG would build resilience by drawing on the multiple skills of various officers across the entire SCG region in the delivery of the workstreams identified. An officer from any Local Authority or organisation within the coastal group can lead on the items identified and then recover their time from the SCG budget. The money being bid for will be used to either fund officer time or where applicable professional services for the delivery of training.

2.6. The following bullets set out the key activities where continuing funding is required for ongoing supporting delivery items;

- Shoreline management plan oversight, monitoring, reporting. Taking forward recommendations from the SMP-R process.
- Maintaining SCG programme management tools to identify efficiency's in delivery across the region
- Sharing best practice re maintenance activity, process and data collection
- Keep abreast of efficiency guidance and support SCG officers to ensure regional and national targets are met
- Keep abreast of changes in Partnership Funding, lobby for change, share best practice, support the delivery of the national programme by securing contributions and equipping officers with the right knowledge and skills to do so
- Ensure the continuation of the SCG minor works and professional services frameworks. Re-procuring where needed.
- Share best practice in relation to Environmental FCERM, Enhancements and the Regional Habitat Creation Programme.
- Collate and co-ordinate feedback from across the coastal group, to national local and regional consultations which are relevant to FCERM.
- Support the SCOPAC research chair to identify research opportunities which benefit FCERM in the region and seek funding to deliver them
- Ensuring continued SCG leadership interaction with the RFCC and national Forums thereby continuing to strengthen the links of the Coastal Groups with the RFCCs
- To ensure the wider SCG is kept informed of RFCC business, particularly in relation to how officers can access levy and how it can be used
- Ensure the continuation of information dissemination through the group's websites

2.7. Supporting these items can be linked back to the RFCC's purpose, priorities, objectives, commitments and principles (rather than purely to 'Local Levy Principles) – summarised, where relevant to this bid, below

The RFCC's primary focus is to support the delivery to time and budget of all flood and coastal schemes in the 6-year Capital programme and the Local levy programme and to ensure a robust future programme.

The RFCCs will ensure they periodically review the FCRM strategy and priorities for the region together with the main plans (statutory and non- statutory e.g. Flood Risk Management Plans, Shoreline Management Plans, Catchment plans) to ensure their continuing relevance.

The RFCCs will review and advise on Shoreline Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans, with a view to ensuring there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines.

The RFCC's will encourage and support LLFAs and other RMAs to develop a local programme of proposed priority schemes, and to forward such schemes for possible inclusion in the Regional FCRM or Local Levy programmes.

The RFCCs have been highly successful in recent years in delivering large programmes of new flood defence schemes and maintenance works, significantly reducing the level of risk from all sources of flooding across the region. Nonetheless, much remains to be achieved to further reduce the risk to communities in the region.

The RFCCs will support the quest for efficiencies, both as specifically required by Government and through the normal process of project management, including by innovation and supporting new solutions. The Committee will ensure that it adopts an ethos whereby all parties work in partnership and collaboration, potentially across traditional boundaries, to assist efficient and effective development and delivery of programmes of work.

The RFCC will also encourage all delivery bodies to have access to the appropriate skills and will support building skills through training and encourage resolving skill gaps through shared service delivery.

RFCC's and their membership should play a key role in ensuring the necessary partnership funding is secured to supplement Government Grant in Aid. RFCC's will ensure every effort is made to generate Partnership contributions from sources in addition to Local Authorities.

RFCC's should also help to establish more effective programme management of the 6-year Capital and Levy programmes to be fully aware of partnership funding requirements and actions being taken to secure it, enabling progression to construction of as many projects, including lower scoring ones, as possible.

The RFCC will also encourage all delivery bodies to have access to the appropriate skills, senior management and political commitment to develop and deliver their schemes within the programme within the agreed timescale and budget and will support building skills through training and encourage resolving skill gaps through shared service delivery.

The RFCC's will take into account wider environmental considerations within their region that will be influenced by flood and coastal erosion risk management decisions and will support the increase environmental benefits, habitat improvements and the use of natural flood management techniques both within the current capital programme and as part of all future schemes. They will also identify increased opportunities to protect and enhance the natural environment arising from schemes of works, and how natural flood risk management can play a role.

The RFCC's will actively seek out and collaborate with a wider range of potential partners in the third sector, including those able to assist with achieving improved environmental outcomes within existing schemes.

The RFCC's support the delivery of government flood and coastal erosion risk management policy and the National FCERM Strategy, taking into account Defra and Environment Agency guidance. They also act to enable the RMA's to act consistently with the National FCERM Strategy and Local FCRM Strategies (when they are published) when exercising their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions.

A priority action for the RFCC's is to improve links with Maritime Local Authorities and Coastal Groups to better address coastal flooding and erosion issues and ensure the committees have an increased understanding of such matters. They also want to build stronger, sustained relationships with LLFAs, and other key partners (such as coastal groups), improving understanding of FCERM issues, and how RFCC's can support them to deliver their FCRM priorities.

3.0 Conclusions and recommendations

- 3.1. With budget cuts, austerity and a lack of resource, the SCG can no longer deliver key priorities for the benefit of the RMA's and members across the region without external funding. The SCG and SCOPAC deliver key benefits for its members including; ground breaking scientific research on complex coastal issues, development and oversight of Shoreline Management Plans and their implementation, workshops on topical coastal management practice, shared consultancy frameworks for procurement with significant cost savings, influencing national policy with a collective Local Government voice, knowledge sharing field trips, supporting higher education bodies with joint research and funding and the development and oversight of the South-west and South-east Regional Coastal Monitoring Programmes.
- 3.2. Individual officers within each Local Authority simply don't have the capacity or resource to work tactically across the region on the items identified above without the support of the SCG.
- 3.3. The RFCC has a key role to play in fostering links between the Environment Agency, LLFAs, other risk management authorities and other relevant bodies to engender mutual understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in their areas.
- 3.4. A priority action for the RFCC's is to improve links with Maritime Local Authorities and Coastal Groups to better address coastal flooding and erosion issues and ensure the committees have an increased understanding of such matters. The RFCC also want to build stronger, sustained relationships with LLFAs, and other key partners (such as coastal groups), improving understanding of FCERM issues, and how RFCC's can support them to deliver their FCRM priorities.
- 3.5. The SCG is seeking £46k from the Southern and Wessex RFCC for the next 5 years (£23k from each per year) to support the delivery of its priority activities.
- 3.6. As part of the reporting process the SCG will identify what the group has achieved with the Local Levy funding and present a summary to the RFCC members annually.
- 3.7. Therefore, the recommendation is for the committee to approve a bid of £115,000 (£23,000 per year for the next 5 years for the financial years 2020/21 - 2025/26) to support the delivery of the Southern Coastal Groups (SCG) function.

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Local Levy Proforma for New Bids

Please select the appropriate principle that your local levy bid incorporates:

- Small schemes that help ensure a balanced geographic spread of projects – where there is an absence of flood risk projects in an area.
- Pipeline and project development work for which Levy can be used:
 - as seed funding to develop projects
 - for strategy works or plans
 - to develop schemes so that they are ‘shovel ready’ by 2020/21, i.e. after the
 - current six year FCERM GiA programme
 - to help accelerate projects that are already in the programme
- Projects that lead directly to flood and coastal erosion risk reduction.
- Projects which address local priorities that would otherwise remain unfunded without significant contributions. In particular, Levy can be used to fund projects where there is a difference between the amount of FCERM GiA the project can secure and the total project cost. This helps maximise Government investment and the numbers in the region.
- Schemes that have already received Levy funding but which require additional funding or where there has been an unforeseen scope change, (so as not to waste previous Levy investment).

Levy may also be appropriate:

- To support initiatives for communities at risk of flooding or coastal erosion, that are not appropriate for receiving Government funding or to fund posts to help organisations bid for and successfully complete works.
- To ensure environmental enhancements are built into projects so that projects not only protect people but create a better environment for people and wildlife.
- For emergency use: for example, to support or facilitate flood or coastal erosion prevention during or immediately after a flood, storm or tidal surge event.

Once a bid has been recommended to go forward for further approval, e.g. from the Officer’s Working Group to the Investment & Strategy sub-committee, the paper needs to be amended to include the recommendations made at the relevant meeting.