

Name of Committee:	Cabinet		
Committee Date:	14 th February 2024		
Report Title:	Coastal Environmental & Research Initiatives		
Responsible Officer:	Mark Stratton		
Cabinet Lead:	Cllr Liz Fairhurst – Cabinet Lead for Coastal		
Status:	Non-Exempt		
Urgent Decision:	No	Key Decision:	Yes
Appendices:	N/A		
Background Papers:	Link to Southern Coastal Group and SCOPAC Background Information - https://southerncoastalgroup-scopac.org.uk/		
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Report Number:	HBC/077/2024		

Corporate Priorities:

Supports Havant Borough Council's Corporate Strategy 'Pride in Place' aspiration, which is to *create a great place to live, work and enjoy*. The aspiration specifically refers to our communities being safe from coastal erosion and flooding, with our coastlines and habitats being high in biodiversity. The initiatives outlined within this paper will contribute towards this aspiration.

Executive Summary:

Coastal Partners are bidding for up to £1,920,500 of funding across six workstreams which will support delivery of Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) across the Solent. These are all required to help improve understanding in the areas of coastal policy delivery, coastal process science and coastal habitat type and availability. This understanding will in turn facilitate the on the ground FCERM project delivery across the region for all Risk Management Authorities.

The Executive Head for Coastal Partners is the chair of the Southern Coastal Group (SCG) & Standing Conference on Problems Associated with Coastlines (SCOPAC). Havant Borough Council already host the finances of the SCG & SCOPAC and will be the lead organisation bidding for funds from Defra Grant in Aid (GiA).

Coastal Partners officers will lead delivery of the works which will be of direct benefit to the Council's flood risk management duties and powers. The outputs will be made available to all the other Local Authorities in the SCG region (Portland Bill to Selsey Bill) and the Environment Agency to help them inform their flood and erosion risk planning.

Recommendations:

- a. That Cabinet notes that Coastal Partners are bidding for up to £1,920,500 of funding across six initiatives for the benefit of the Council and the Southern Coastal Group / SCOPAC.
- b. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Head of Coastal Partners, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead for Coastal and the S151 Officer, to implement the six Coastal Environmental & Research Initiatives identified in this paper, subject to securing the necessary funding.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Coastal Partners are bidding for up to £1,920,500 of funding across six new workstreams which will support delivery of Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) across the Solent. Some of these bids have been submitted to the Environment Agency (EA) and other are being drafted ready for submission.
- 1.2 These important initiatives will contribute to an improved understanding in key areas of coastal science, research and the natural environment. The outputs of the work will facilitate on the ground FCERM project delivery across the region for all Risk Management Authorities.
- 1.3 The outputs of the work will be of benefit to, and shared with, all of the Local Authorities in the Southern Coastal Group (SCG) region (Portland Bill to Selsey Bill) and the EA. <https://southerncoastalgroup-scopac.org.uk/about/>

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The SCG & SCOPAC is the regional coastal group for central southern England principally comprising of coastal managers from councils across the region, the EA, Local Authority planners and others with a knowledge of shoreline management. The primary objective of the group is to be a source of expertise on the coast and to advise and influence the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC) and other stakeholders on matters relating to the 648km coast from Portland Bill in Dorset to Selsey Bill in West Sussex, including the whole of the coastline of the Isle of Wight.

- 2.2 The SCG & SCOPAC has a key role to play in:
 - 2.2.1 The successful development and delivery of research in the field of coastal risk management,
 - 2.2.2 The monitoring and coordination of regional Shoreline Management Plans.
 - 2.2.3 Encouraging the development of a co-ordinated approach to the collection, storage and dissemination of data relevant to the effective management of risks at the shoreline.
 - 2.2.4 Ensuring the views of member organisations are considered in the development and implementation of national policies and initiatives relating to coastal risk management.
 - 2.2.5 Identifying, developing and sharing best practice with regard to procurement.
 - 2.2.6 Encouraging active political involvement in coastal risk management by its constituent members.
- 2.3 The Executive Head for Coastal Partners is the chair of SCG & SCOPAC. Coastal Partners oversee the work programme of the groups and have historically taken a lead in the delivery of studies and research given the in-house skills and capabilities available. The SCOPAC research Chair Dr Samantha Cope is also a Coastal Partners officer.
- 2.4 In order to ensure the smooth delivery of the FCERM programme in the region there are often many pieces of research and various studies that are required to inform up to date thinking and decision making. These are often identified on the Shoreline Management Plan action plans or are put forward by members of the group as required.
- 2.5 Coastal Partners are currently preparing and submitting business cases to the EA to access Defra FCRM Grant in Aid (GiA) to undertake six pieces of work. These are set out in the table 1 below with detail about each project in the following sections. The projects numbered 3-6 in the table are all linked environmental studies.

Table 1 – list of projects

Project Title	Cost Estimate	Duration
1 - Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Management & Administration	~ £45,000	1 year
2 - SCOPAC Sediment Transport Study	~ £800,000	4 years
3 - Habitat Compensation & Restoration Programme (HCRP)	~ £250,000	4 years
4 - Solent Dynamic Coast Project Update	~ £236,000	3 years
5 - Coastal Grazing Marsh Study	~ £289,500	3 years
6 - Southmoor Coastal Habitat Monitoring & Engagement	~ £300,000	5 years
Total funds being requested from Defra Grant in Aid	~ £1,920,500	1-5 years

2.6 Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) Management & Administration

2.6.1 SMPs provide the principle & policy for coastal management along a wide area of coast. The Local Authorities across the Solent adopted the SMPs around 2010. There are three SMPs covering the Solent coastline and each one has its own individual action plan identifying the actions required in order to deliver the SMPs.

2.6.2 The funds being bid for are to run officer level groups for the three SMPs consisting of Local Authority officers, planners and other regulators across the Solent. The work of the groups will vary but generally requires the updating of SMP action plans, maintaining oversight of policy delivery, reporting back to the EA and Defra on progress.

2.6.3 Coastal Partners are bidding for £45,000 to allow each SMP to undertake this work across a oneyear period.

2.7 SCOPAC Sediment Transport Study.

2.7.1 Understanding coastal science is essential to managing coastlines and the successful delivery of FCERM projects.

2.7.2 This is a suite of research looking at updating the understanding of coastal processes across the south coast of England including work on storm analysis, region wide numerical

modelling, understanding sediment movement/ transport rates and updating public facing databases of information to inform coastal managers.

2.7.3 The last SCOPAC sediment transport study was completed in 2012 and has provided an incredibly important evidence base for FCERM. <https://www.scopac.org.uk/sts/>

2.7.4 Coastal Partners will bid for up to ~£800,000 to undertake this work across a four year period. (£1.04m including 30% project optimism bias allowance). Final cost estimates being worked up.

2.8 Habitat Compensation & Restoration Programme (HCRP)

2.8.1 The HCRP is the Government's agreed mechanism for delivering strategic habitat compensation for FCERM.

2.8.2 Everywhere a "Hold the Line" Policy is implemented along the shoreline coastal squeeze occurs. This is a process where important coastal habitats like saltmarsh are expected to be lost as sea levels rise.

2.8.3 Along a natural coastline the habitats would naturally roll back as water levels rise however, the sea defences that exist or which are planned to be constructed prevent this from happening and act as barriers to habitat roll back; as a result habitats are squeezed and lost.

2.8.4 Replacing and recreating this habitat is a legal requirement of the SMPs. Without a clear plan in place for the future, regulators such as Natural England and the Environment Agency could turn down planning approvals for any new FCERM works in the Solent.

2.8.5 Coastal Partners maintains a live habitat balance sheet and produces annual review reports to track habitat compensation progress and needs. <https://southerncoastalgroup-scopac.org.uk/rhcp/>.

2.8.6 Coastal Partners are bidding for ~ £250,000 to undertake this work across a four-year period. (£325,000 including 30% project optimism bias allowance).

2.9 Solent Dynamic Coast Project Update

- 2.9.1 To understand how much habitat loss is expected to occur over the next 100 years, up to date estimates of coastal squeeze in line with the latest climate change and sea level rise guidance is paramount.
- 2.9.2 An assessment of potential habitat loss over the next 100 years is incredibly important for the HCRP (2.8). The last time an assessment was completed was in 2008. Climate change guidance has been updated twice since that time. Most recently in 2018.
- 2.9.3 This piece of work will utilise complex GIS analysis of coastal squeeze using latest sea level rise guidance and policy information to work out how much habitat loss can be expected under various policy scenarios.
- 2.9.4 Coastal Partners are bidding for ~£236,000 to undertake this work across a threeyear period. (£306,800 including 30% project optimism bias allowance).

2.10 Coastal Grazing Marsh Study

- 2.10.1 The planned creation of saltmarsh to legally offset the losses of coastal squeeze in the Solent often leads to the loss of coastal grazing marsh as habitats transition. i.e. the best places in the Solent to allow saline tidal water to inundate low lying areas to create new saltmarsh and mudflat are often where coastal grazing marsh, a freshwater habitat, already exists. Therefore, as a result we also need to find additional compensatory coastal grazing marsh.
- 2.10.2 To date the HCRP has focused primarily on delivery of intertidal habitat compensation, but there is now an urgent need for coastal grazing marsh compensation to address knock on impacts.

2.10.3 This study will look to identify and prioritise potential sites for the creation of new coastal grazing marsh habitat, bird high tide functionally linked sites and saline lagoons.

2.10.4 Coastal Partners are bidding for ~ £289,500 to undertake this work across a three-year period. (£376,350 including 30% project optimism bias allowance).

2.11 Southmoor Coastal Habitat Monitoring & Engagement

2.11.1 This piece of work is needed to quantify the area of intertidal habitat created and associated landward habitats lost at Southmoor, Havant, following the unmanaged breaching of the sea wall in 2020.

2.11.2 The EA had previously planned to deliver an intertidal habitat creation project at Southmoor, a privately owned parcel of land, in order to meet some of the needs of the HCRP. Unfortunately, the project did not progress due to high costs and over time the defences in this location failed. This allowed unmanaged tidal inundation onto the site and the partial loss of the coastal footpath in this location.

2.11.3 The project will monitor the development of the intertidal habitat (using UAV and ecological surveys) and the use of the site by breeding and over-wintering birds. It will also confirm how this site should be incorporated into the HCRP habitat balance sheet and work with partners to develop public engagement / interpretation materials to explain about the evolution and adaptation of habitats at the site.

2.11.4 Coastal Partners are bidding for up to ~£300,000 to undertake this work across a five-year period. (£390,000 including 30% project optimism bias allowance).

3.0 Options

3.1 To note the various bids for funding and their expected detail/ estimated project value and give delegated authority to undertake these important pieces of work for the benefit of the SCG & SCOPAC.

- 3.2 Should the above option not be supported these important pieces of work would not progress until another organisation or group of organisations could be found to implement them. This would carry risks for the wider FCERM programme in the Solent and would be challenging because Coastal Partners are best placed to undertake this work.

4.0 Relationship to the Corporate Strategy

- 4.1 Undertaking this work supports the Council's Corporate Strategy 'Pride in Place' aspiration, which is to create a great place to live, work and enjoy.
- 4.2 The aspiration specifically refers to our communities being safe from coastal erosion and flooding, with our coastlines and habitats being high in biodiversity. The initiatives outlined within this paper will contribute towards this aspiration not only for the Council but also the wider Solent.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Coastal Partners are bidding for funding to undertake six important studies for the benefit of the Council and all the other organisations who are members of the SCG & SCOPAC. They also have the support of the EA and Natural England to undertake this work.
- 5.2 The studies are critical to underpin the wider delivery of FCERM in the Solent and cover a range of different topic areas.

6.0 Implications and Comments

- 6.1 S151 Comments - Members should be assured that the recommendations have no direct impact on the Council's budget. If successful, the outcomes of the work undertaken could have budget implication, both positive or negative, but any decision relating to the outcomes will require a further decision at such time as required and no existing funds are committed as a result of this report.

The only resource requirements are that involved in securing the funding detailed in this report, and those resources will be met from existing budgets.

6.2 Financial Implications

6.2.1 The amounts of funding being bid for are set out in Table 1 of the report.

6.2.2 The Council already hosts the finances of the SCG & SCOPAC and will be the lead organisation bidding for funds from Defra Grant in Aid (GiA). Coastal Partners officers will lead delivery of the works.

6.2.3 The funding being sought is FCERM GiA administered by the EA on behalf of Defra. The funding for the projects has been allocated to them on the EA's capital programme however is subject to the submission of business cases which are technically and financially assured by the EA.

6.2.4 Coastal Partners have the support of our partners in making these funding bids with a strong acknowledgement of the need for the works. However, if no funds are secured then the projects will not proceed.

6.3 Monitoring Officer Comments

Members can be assured that the Monitoring Officer has no concerns and is supportive of this matter.

6.4 Legal Implications

6.4.1 The Council will be identified as the lead organisation on the funding bids and will be making the application as a Borough Council.

6.4.2 These works are currently undertaken under s.1 of the Localism Act 2011 (power of general competence), which enables a Local Authority to do anything that individuals generally may do, whether for a commercial purpose or otherwise (with or without charge) for the benefit of its area.

The Council will lead this work under the partnership arrangement of SCG/SCOPAC and will co-operate with other members of the group throughout delivery.

6.5 Equality and Diversity

6.5.1 It is not considered that there are any equality or diversity implications as a result of undertaking the work identified in this report.

6.6 Human Resources

6.6.1 Coastal Partners has a detailed service plan to guide the delivery of its work which is signed off by its client board. The plan currently identifies and allocates the resource required for this work.

6.7 Information Governance

6.7.1 Any data collected as part of the project will be held in line with the Council's retention and data protection policies.

6.7.2 Any Intellectual Property generated by and within these studies will be made available to SCG / SCOPAC and the EA on a royalty free, non-exclusive license basis to use to support flood risk work for the benefit of the Havant area and wider regional interdependencies.

6.8 Climate and Environment

6.8.1 The delivery of these studies all contributes towards a better understanding of the science that underpins sustainable coastal management. They all ultimately look to improve the natural and built environment with consideration of climate change at their core.

7.0 Risks

7.1 If no funding is secured the project will not progress. This will be a risk to the wider FCERM delivery programme across the SCG & SCOPAC region.

7.2 The projects have been carefully costed and will be applying for an additional 30% optimism bias applied in line with the treasury green book. If any project level risks are realised this risk budget can be applied for from the EA.

8.0 Consultation

- 8.1 Key statutory consultees such as the EA and Natural England will be consulted throughout the life of the projects and have already been involved in shaping the need for and scope of the work required.
- 8.2 There are no planned consultations for any of the work identified in this report.

9.0 Communications

- 9.1 All of the projects will develop their own engagement plans and it is expected there will be regular engagement with key regulators and the wider SCG & SCOPAC group. The study reporting will be published on the SCOPAC & SCG websites when complete.

Agreed and signed off by:		Date:
Cabinet Lead:	Councillor Liz Fairhurst	02/01/2024
Executive Head:	Lyall Cairns	05/01/2024
Monitoring Officer:	Jo McIntosh	19/01/2024
Section151 Officer:	Steven Pink	03/01/2024