

Meeting: Environment Sub Committee

Date: 7th September 2016

Title: Coastal Erosion – Overview of Strategy

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Service: Environment, Housing and Leisure

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Environment Sub Committee with an overview of the national and local strategies in relation to managing coastal erosion

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to note the content of the report.

3. Details

Background

Coastal defence is the protection of land from erosion and/or flooding by the sea. The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has overall national responsibility for policy on flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) in England.

North Tyneside has approximately 10km of coastline stretching from Hartley Cove to the River Tyne.

The majority of North Tyneside's coastline is protected by hard sea defences (sea walls etc) although there is one section adjacent to Whitley Bay golf course which is undefended cliffs.

The Council has a statutory duty to manage its coastline in line with national legislation / policies and is required to produce its own local strategy for coastal defence.

Shoreline Management Plans (SMP)

The overarching strategy for the management of our coastline is the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). The plan provides a broad assessment of the risks associated with coastal evolution and offers a policy framework to address the risks to people and the developed, historic and natural environment. The plan covers a 100 year period and identifies the most sustainable approaches to managing the risks to the coast in the short term (0 – 20 years), medium term (20 to 50 years) and the long term (50 to 100 years).

The SMP is a non-statutory policy document for coastal defence management and planning. It takes into account other existing planning initiatives and legislative requirements and is intended to inform wider strategic planning issues. However, the SMP does not set policy for anything other than coastal defence management.

An SMP was first produced for the Northumberland coast in 1998 (SMP1). This plan was updated in 2009 (SMP2) in the light of new national guidance, changing regional pressures, the most recent coastal planning strategies and local community needs. The updated plan is based on improved understanding of coastal evolution and covers an area of coastline from the Scottish Borders to the River Tyne.

The shoreline management policies considered in the plan are based on DEFRA guidelines and criteria. The range of SMP policy options are:-

- **Hold the line** - Maintain or upgrade the levels of protection provided by defences.
- **Advance the line** - Build new defences seaward of the existing defence line.
- **Managed Realignment** - Allowing realignment of the new shoreline with management to control or limit movement.
- **No Active Intervention** - A decision not to invest in providing or maintaining defences.

The specific policies selected for the North Tyneside coastline are detailed in the Northumberland and North Tyneside Shoreline Management Plan 2.

North Tyneside Coastal Strategy

The biggest challenge facing the Council with respect to coastal management is the replacement or maintenance of the various sea defences and structures which defend the bulk of our coastline.

The North Tyneside Coastal Strategy provides a high level basis for decision making on the long term management of the coast between Hartley Cove and the River Tyne. For schemes funded by DEFRA, the Environment Agency requires that all projects are submitted to them for approval within this strategic framework.

The document appraises a range of coastal defence options to determine the most environmentally acceptable and cost effective method of managing risks such as flooding, erosion and sea level rise.

The first North Tyneside Coastal Strategy was published in 2007. Since this initial publication, a revised Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2) has been published and a number of schemes have been completed. These include the refurbishment of Cullercoats Piers and a new sea wall at Trinity Road. Lower Central Promenade reconstruction is currently progressing.

A separate document summarising the main points of the 2007 North Tyneside Coastal Strategy Plan is available at Appendix A. Although SMP2 was completed after the Coastal Strategy this is still the document that informs the Council's forward programme of coastal works.

A revised Coastal Strategy is currently being developed which sets out long term, sustainable solutions for the management of the coastline while incorporating a number of changes to legislation and terminology since the original Strategy was published. This is planned to be reported at Cabinet within the next 6 months.

Funding

DEFRA provides funding for flood and coastal erosion risk management activities in the form of Grant in Aid (GiA). The Environment Agency has a strategic overview of the coast and they have delegated authority to approve and administer this grant aid for coastal erosion projects and studies undertaken by maritime local authorities.

Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs) have a key role in the co-ordination of FCERM by advising on and approving the implementation of programmes of work in their areas and supporting the development of funding for local priority projects and works. RFCCs also provide for local democratic input as the majority of representatives are local authority elected members. Councillor John Harrison is North Tyneside's current representative.

DEFRA have developed a 6 year forward planning process to allocate the national coast protection budget. They have adopted a risk based approach that allows them to prioritise projects. The amount of flood and coastal erosion risk management Grant in Aid available to each capital scheme depends on the number of houses protected, the damages prevented and other benefits a project can deliver. Where there is a shortfall in funding, local contributions from the council and other partners are sought through the current Partnership Funding Scheme.

To manage the protection of the coastline of England and Wales, coast protection authorities have been encouraged to

- Establish coastal groups
- Develop shoreline management plans
- Adopt a strategic approach
- Monitor their coastline

Coastal Groups

North Tyneside Council are members of the North East Coastal Group (NECG). The boundaries of the coastal group extend from St Abbs Head in the Scottish Borders to Gibraltar Point in Lincolnshire

Coastal Groups are technical groups principally comprising of coastal managers from Maritime Local Authorities, Ports Authorities and the Environment Agency. Other interested bodies and organisations, such as Natural England, English Heritage and the Marine Management Organisation also attend these groups.

Coastal Groups provide a source of expertise on the coast and play a key role in advising and influencing the Environment Agency and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs) on all matters relating to the coast.

Coastal Monitoring

SMP1 identified the need to undertake coastal monitoring so that the coastal processes at work are better understood. Information has to be collected over many years to build up a meaningful picture. Monitoring of the North Tyneside Coastline began in 2001 with eight beach cross sections identified and monitored. Scarborough Borough Council undertakes coastal monitoring on behalf of authorities, including North Tyneside, from the Scottish Borders down to Flamborough Head.

For North Tyneside monitoring surveys now include beach profile surveys, beach topographic surveys, aerial photography, LiDAR and visual inspection of coastal defence assets. The data being collected will eventually allow more accurate prediction of future coastal evolution and be invaluable in the design of defence schemes. Survey data going back to 2001 is stored at the North East Coastal Observatory and can be viewed on their website.

4. Appendices

Appendix A – Coastal Strategy Summary

5. Background Information

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author.

Shoreline Management Plans 1 and 2
North Tyneside Coastal Defence Strategy 2007