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| ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – EAST ANGLIA AREA | | Item No: xx | Report No: EFCC13/16 |
| Meeting: | ANGLIAN (EASTERN) REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE (RFCC) | Subject: | SMP POLICY CHANGE HOPTON (SMP6) AND CORTON (SMP7) |
| Date: | 20 October 2017 | Officer Responsible: | Sharon Bleese Coastal Manager (South) Coastal Partnership East |

RECOMMENDATION

Following the completion and approval of the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy, the Committee is asked to:

- A. Approve change of SMP6 policy from Managed Realignment in the second and third epochs (medium to long-term) to Hold the Line for the following policy units:

Hopton Policy Unit 6.20
Corton Policy Unit 6.22

1. Background

- 1.1 The current SMP6, Kelling to Lowestoft, covers in part the coastline of North Norfolk, Waveney District Councils and all of Great Yarmouth Borough Council and was adopted by all in 2012. The adoption followed a review of original document produced in 2005 in order to resolve some concerns raised during the public consultation, but this review did not include any additional technical information at that time.
- 1.2 Shoreline Management Plans identify the intention of management for each section of the coastline in England and Wales at a strategic level. This is broken down into three time periods (epochs) of short (to 2025) medium (2026 to 2055) and long term (2056 to 2105). The coastline has been subdivided through a defined hierarchy to the lowest level where a continuous stretch of coastline has the same policy approach for each epoch, this is a management unit.
- 1.3 A framework for updating of SMP policies has been identified by the Environment Agency and its implementation in Norfolk and Suffolk and all changes to the SMP of a major kind (such as a change in policy) require certain criteria to be met. The criteria relevant to Hopton and Corton include:
- 1.4 Significant new evidence arising from further investigation into local options, such as from a Strategy Plan / scheme feasibility study and a severe event has made an element of the existing SMP policy or action plan untenable.
- 1.5 The approval process for a major change in SMP policy includes, in the case of SMP6, Policy Unit 6.20 includes public consultation (undertaken throughout the strategy review and specifically from July 2016 to September 2016) and endorsement from Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Environment Committee (as agreed 1st March 2017).
- 1.6 In the case of SMP6 Policy Unit 6.22, initial agreement from the Suffolk Coast Forum (as agreed on 13th July 2017), public consultation (undertaken throughout the strategy review and specifically from July 2016 to September 2016) and approval by Waveney District Council's Cabinet (approved 14th June 2017).

1.7 The change in policy has to be approved by the Anglian (Eastern) RFCC before final signature from the Environment Agency Regional Director.

2. Hopton SMP policy change proposal

2.1 The SMP policy for Hopton is to Hold the Line in the short term through maintenance of existing defences, moving to Managed Realignment in the medium to long-term.

2.2 A series of adverse weather conditions during 2013, including the December 2013 storm surge resulted in significant erosion and subsequent failure of defence structures at Hopton ahead of the predicted residual life. This failure allowed accelerated erosion to the soft cliffs and loss of land behind. The land on top of this cliff is occupied by a number of homes and leisure parks (Bourne Leisure and Potters).

2.3 Bourne Leisure initiated emergency works to restrict the damage to the cliffs and their property; this was developed into a submission for a full coast protection scheme, approximately £8m of private investment.

2.4 This work has been taken into account during the strategy review.

3. Corton SMP policy change proposal

3.1 The SMP policy for Corton is to Hold the Line in the short term through maintenance of existing defences, moving to Managed Realignment in the medium to long-term. Minor works are permitted to slow erosion.

3.2 The vision behind the policy was to allow natural straightening of the coast at both Hopton and Corton thereby improving sediment linkages and moving towards a sustainable long-term management.

3.3 Since the SMP, privately funded works have been built at Hopton and there has been a change in sediment processes, which means this vision cannot be achieved. Therefore the preferred medium to long-term policy is to Hold the Line through improving the existing defences, dependent upon funding.

4. Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy

4.1 Development of the Strategy has involved consideration of the constraints and opportunities, reflecting the community's aspirations, coastal dynamics and funding.

4.2 A key task was a review of the existing policies for future shoreline management as proposed by the Shoreline Management Plans, in this case SMP6 and SMP7.

4.3 A key aspect of the strategy has been working with communities and key stakeholders to ensure that the strategy best meets their needs. Feedback from the stakeholder consultations highlighted that the primary aspiration along the strategy frontage is for continued protection of community and business assets to provide increased long-term security, certainty and economic growth. However, this was accompanied by a broad understanding that significant private investment would be needed to make this achievable. Such investment has already been achieved at Hopton and in principle commitments have been agreed for parts of the Hopton to Corton frontage.

4.4 Gt Yarmouth Borough Council and Waveney District Council, supported by Coastal Partnership East will continue to work with local businesses and the community to develop a way forward that gives appropriate weight to the aspirations of the community within the broader context of sustainability.

- 4.5 The policy changes were submitted to and agreed by Gt Yarmouth Borough Council's Environment Committee and the Suffolk Coast Forum.
- 4.6 The proposed policy change and consultation process has been developed in partnership with community representatives.
- 4.7 Community consultation undertaken throughout the strategy review (October 2014 to September 2016).

5. Finance and Sustainability

- 5.1 The wording of the revised SMP policy text is to contain the following caveat to ensure that any future proposed works are sustainable.
- 5.2 Sustainability is defined as, either public funding or private funding, or both are available for a justifiable business case, and that practical engineering solutions are available which are compatible with coastal processes.
- 5.3 The consultation highlighted amongst some members of the community that the policy change should be to Hold the Line for the medium to long-term. There is a risk, in particular for Corton, that there is an expectation of this, in the information provided during the consultation to the public it was addressed as follows:

The proposed change to policy does not mean that Corton will be automatically defended but it does allow greater flexibility for Waveney District Council to work with the local community to develop a way forward that gives appropriate weight to the aspirations of the community within the broader context of environmental sustainability and available funding.

- 5.4 The development of the change in SMP policy, the consultation process and the planning of future works has been undertaken both with the statutory bodies but also extensively with local businesses, communities, parish councils and organisations.
- 5.5 A comprehensive funding strategy has been developed as part of the strategy review.
- 5.6 Works to the Hopton frontage have been privately funded and commitments in principle have been made by other private investors for parts of the Corton frontage.
- 5.7 The strategy review included alternative implementation options should little or no private investment is forthcoming.

6. Other Issues

- 6.1 This report has been prepared having taken into account the results of an Equality Impact Assessment, a Sustainability Impact Assessment and a Partnership Impact Assessment.

7. Community Consultation

- 7.1 A change in SMP policy is regarded under the Environment Agency SMP change framework as a major change. This requires a public consultation before this change can be progressed to local authority approval.
- 7.2 The consultation was throughout the strategy review from October 2014 to September 2016 and specifically about the SMP policies from July 2016 to September 2016.
- 7.3 The consultation was promoted through digital and social media, in the press, village leaflet drops, through local groups and organisations and posters in prominent places. A series of

drop in events were held across the strategy area.

7.4 For the consultation for the period July 2016 to September 2016 over 300 responses were received. Directly relating to Hopton and Corton frontages, 106 agree with the proposed management option and only 2 disagreed.

7.5 **Overall there was strong local support for the change in SMP policies proposed by the strategy review.**

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Following the completion and approval of the Gorleston to Lowestoft Coastal Strategy, the Committee is asked to:

A. Approve change of SMP6 policy from Managed Realignment in the second and third epochs (medium to long-term) to Hold the Line for the following policy units:

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Appendix 1. Gorleston to Lowestoft Strategy Review document



Gorleston to
Lowestoft Main Strat

Prepared by:

**Sharon Bleese, Coastal Manager (South)
Coastal Partnership East**