

Subject: Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policy change for Hopton (SMP 6.20)

Report to: EMT (16/2/17) Environment Committee (1/3/17)

Report by: Bill Parker, Head of Coastal Management Coastal Partnership East

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. From the review of the strategy for Gorleston to Lowestoft it is recommended that council approve the change of Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policy for sub cell 6.20 Hopton to “Hold the line” for both medium and long term.
2. Authorise officers to seek approval with other organisations in accordance with the change procedure detailed in this report.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This council has been working with Waveney District Council to review the coastal management strategy for the area from Gorleston to Lowestoft. This has looked at the changes to coastal processes, condition of defences, new structures, latest data and future plans. The previous strategy produced in 1999 has been superseded by tidal events, natural processes, community concerns and commercial aspirations. Changes to the SMP policy have been identified in two adjoining areas Hopton and Corton, this report only covers Hopton which is within the borough, Corton is being reported through WDC and the Suffolk Coastal Forum.

2. **BACKGROUND**

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 concerns raised during the public consultation, but this review did not include any additional technical information at that time.

The existing SMP6 policy for Hopton is shown as covering three time periods.

- The policy for the first epoch up to 2025 is “Hold the line” which would involve maintaining the defences until they reached the end of their serviceable life.
- The second epoch up to 2055 the policy changes to “managed realignment” which would see no further maintenance and the possible removal of any structures.

- The third epoch up to 2105 and beyond is a continuation of “Managed realignment”
(See attached extract from SMP)

Following the production of the SMP, events and private defence works have taken place which are significant to warrant a review of the policy covering the medium and long term. This is required in order to take account of the changes that have happened and to give reassurance to the community and businesses of the longer term future for Hopton. The SMP is intended to be a “living document” and this proposal is entirely consistent with that objective.

3. Change process

Within the guidelines issued by the Environment Agency (EA) for the delivery and maintenance of SMPs there is a section to cover any necessary changes to policies.

Changes to SMPs may be necessary because of:

- *significant new **research** or evidence on parameters that informed the decisions taken whilst developing the SMP;*
- *significant changes in **Government policy** – such as on spatial planning and adaptation – since the SMP was approved;*
- *significant new evidence arising from further investigation into local options, such as from a **Strategy Plan / scheme feasibility study**;*
- *a severe **event** has made an element of the existing SMP policy or action plan untenable;*
- *textual **correction or clarification** of meaning required since SMP approval;*
- ***organisational change** amongst those involved in SMP development that may affect SMP implementation;*
- *a need to update or amend programmes of work following **work progressed**.*
- *This review may prompt changes that need to be made to the SMP. Alternatively, any individual or organisation may propose a change stemming from one of the reasons outlined above, and this can be put forward for consideration within the Coastal Group if it has the support of the Environment Agency, a local authority within the SMP area, Natural England and/or English Heritage.*

Changes can be classified as Minor, Moderate or Major. The change proposed for Hopton is classified as a “Major change” and requires a public consultation procedure to be followed and agreements by certain authorities obtained.

Approval:

All 'moderate' and 'major' changes potentially impacting upon a nationally or internationally designated nature conservation site must be approved by Natural England, and potential impacts upon historical features such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments must be approved by English Heritage.

In their development all SMPs were approved by an Elected Members Forum to ensure local democratic input and support. Any change to the SMP must also be approved by a similar elected body and the Environment Committee fulfils that at requirement at Great Yarmouth Borough Council. Therefore the Environment Committee fulfils an essential role with the approval process of any proposed changes.

All 'major' and 'moderate' changes are to be endorsed by the relevant Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), or a delegated sub-group of it. RFCCs agree the programme of funding for FCRM works and are responsible for 'reviewing and endorsing' SMPs. They therefore have an important role in scrutinising the credibility of an SMP, and any changes to it. 'Major' and 'Moderate' changes generally involve new work proposals or changes to the scope of existing work proposals that are likely to have funding implications and wider impacts.

All 'major' changes should be approved by the Environment Agency Regional Director. The Regional Director may wish to approve 'moderate' changes on a discretionary basis. Otherwise, the Environment Agency Area Manager is responsible for ensuring 'moderate' and 'minor' changes are approved at an appropriate level within the organisation: this does not mean the Area Managers needs to approve all of these changes themselves.

The Environment Agency can only finally approve changes after they have been approved by Great Yarmouth Borough Council and endorsed by the Eastern RFCC.

Consultation:

A range of stakeholders at the coast may need to be informed of proposals to change an SMP, and they may wish to be consulted during the process. These may include:

- County authorities in their capacity as Lead Local Flood Authority. They have a duty to co-operate with other authorities within and adjacent to their boundaries, and are responsible for supporting SMP implementation.

- Other government departments/agencies and non-government organisations whose work or interests may be impacted. Infrastructure providers, utility companies, land managers and environmental organisations are likely to be interested in SMP change.
- The public, including individuals, community or interest groups, and Parish Councils.
- Local authorities bordering the relevant SMP boundary who may be affected by change. Change Managers should agree how and when they are consulted.

This policy review has been part of the work undertaken by consultants CH2M within the Gorleston to Lowestoft Strategy review. The proposed change has been looked at from a technical view point and has had public consultation and support. This strategy review is intended to be presented to EA Large Project Review Group (LPRG) in February/March 2017 and will then go to each of the LAs for approval.

The criteria highlighted for the Hopton change are:

- 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. As shown above.

Strategy evidence

The strategic evidence is contained in the Gorleston to Lowestoft Strategy review (G2L report)

Severe event

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

4. IMPACTS

This change will, subject to approvals, enable private investment in maintaining and delivering coastal protection into the medium and long term for this area of the coastline.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Coast protection uses Maritime Local Authority permissive powers, there are no obligatory additional costs from these changes.

The Council has the ability to decide how to manage an area should defences fail; these decisions will range from a full replacement to managed removal. The suggested change of policy for sub cell 6.20 Hopton widens the opportunity for possible private investment in managing the defences in this area.

The change to policy will be, as other areas, clear in identifying that any future works required would be subject to available funding.

6. **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

Delivering community expectation through funding, future works will likely require funding from the private sector.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that council approve the change of policy for sub cell 6.20 Hopton to “Hold the line” for both medium and long term. Authorise officers to seek approval with other organisations in accordance with the change procedure detailed in this report and proceed for endorsement from the Eastern RFCC and final approval from the Environment Agency.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- a. Shoreline Management Plan
- b. Gorleston to Lowestoft Strategy review
- c. EA SMP Change and Reporting Process

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Yes
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Yes
Existing Council Policies:	Yes
Financial Implications:	Yes
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Yes
Risk Implications:	Yes
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	No
Crime & Disorder:	No
Every Child Matters:	No