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To: E&R Policy Overview Committee, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008

Subject: Adoption of the Isle of Grain to South Foreland and Medway  
Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plans

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This paper provides an overview of the coastal management policies contained within the Isle of Grain to South Foreland and Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plans. A paper will be put to Cabinet in July, seeking approval for the adoption of these policies.

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## **Introduction**

1. A Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) is a high level, non-statutory document that determines the coastal defence policy for a stretch of coastline for the next 100 years. They are living documents that need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the policy options, and the data that these decisions are based on, remain up to date.
2. In 2006 Kent County Council adopted the revised South Foreland to Beachy SMP and was one of the first county councils to adopt an SMP.
3. In 2007 the management policies of the Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP were reviewed and a new SMP for the Medway Estuary and Swale was produced. These two documents complete the SMPs for the county. The review process included an Elected Members Forum, with Andrew Bowles representing Kent County Council and Mike Harrison representing the South East Regional Flood Defence committee.
4. The SMP is accompanied by an Action Plan, which aims to facilitate the implementation of the policies and sets a framework for monitoring progress.
5. The final stage of the SMP's production is the formal adoption by each local authority and the Environment Agency. It has been suggested that Kent County Council should also formally adopt the SMP to add more weight to policies that are so critical to the sustainable management of flood and erosion risk within the county. The adoption would also strengthen the relationship between the SMP and planning

within the county. This would be in line with the Council's adoption of The South Foreland to Beachy SMP in 2006.

6. The SMPs will be put to Cabinet in July 2008 to seek approval for their endorsement and adoption as coastal defence policy. This is a key decision on the forward plan.

### **Development of the Shoreline Management Policies**

7. The plan has been developed in line with latest Government (Defra) guidance and has two main influences, technical assessment and democratic input.

8. The plans have been developed by the South East Coastal Group and all decisions made by the group are agreed with Elected Members to make sure the decisions are democratic and to ensure that local interests are being properly represented. To make sure that the plan was properly informed about local issues and interests, a stakeholder group was consulted, with key stakeholders attending workshops to input into the development of the plan.

9. The main factors influencing the policy recommendations for each section of coastline are protection of people, property and infrastructure, economics, technical viability and environmental protection/ enhancement. The shoreline is divided into policy units and shoreline management policies are recommended for each over three epochs: 0-25 years; 25-50 years; and 50 -100 years.

### **Overview of coastal management policies**

10. The majority of the Kent coast has a policy of the hold the line (maintaining or changing the standard of protection) to allow for the long-term protection of the county's major coastal urban areas and infrastructure. Within these two new plans, policies of managed realignment and no active intervention have been selected for some stretches of coastline.

11. Managed realignment allows the shoreline to move backwards or forwards, with management to control or limit movement. This control is often achieved with a defence structure set further in land. Managed realignment is seen as a more sustainable policy option, which also provides for creation of intertidal habitat being lost through coastal squeeze.

12. For the Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP managed realignment has been identified as the most sustainable policy option for the following policy units:

- (a) To commence in the short-term (0-25 year period): Warden Point to Leysdown-on-Sea (with localised hold the line to protect the low-lying sections); Leysdown-on-Sea to Shell Ness.
- (b) To commence in the medium term (25-50 year period): Allhallows-on-Sea to Grain; Faversham Creek to Sportsman Pub; Reculver Towers to Minnis Bay.
- (c) To commence in the long term (50-100 year period): Sportsman Pub to Seasalter

13. A number of managed realignment policies have been selected for the Medway estuary and Swale. In some instances, these policies include localised hold the line to protect villages, infrastructure and other development.

- (a) Managed realignment policies including localised hold the line: Colemouth Creek to Bee Ness Jetty; Kingsnorth Power Station to Cockham Wood; North Halling to Snodland; Snodland to Allington Lock; Allington Lock to North Wouldham; Motney Hill to Ham Green; East of Upchurch to East of Lower Halstow; Murston Pits to Faversham.
- (b) Managed realignment policies to commence in the short-term (0-25 year period): Wouldham Barksore and Chetney Marshes; Shellness to Sayes Court; Sayes Court to North Elmley Island.
- (c) Managed realignment policies in the medium term (25-50 year period): The Strand to west Motney Hill; North Elmley Island to Kingsferry Bridge; Kingsferry Bridge to Rushenden.

14. The proposed managed realignment policies have been recommended to allow the shoreline to revert to a more naturally functioning profile – none of the policies will result in a large breach. Some managed realignment policies may result in the loss of property, land and freshwater habitat, therefore any detailed proposals for implementing these managed realignment policies would first be subject to further detailed investigation and consultation.

15. A no active intervention policy means there will be no investment in coastal defences or operations. Within the two SMPs the no active intervention policies generally relate to stretches of coast where this is already the current management practice and natural shoreline protection is provided by cliff fall debris or accreting material. These areas include:

- (a) Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP: Minster Slopes to Warden Bay; Reculver Country Park; Minnis Bay to Westgate-on-Sea; Cliftonville (Fulsam Rock to White Ness); Whiteness to Ramsgate; Ramsgate Harbour to north of River Stour; South of River Stour to Sandwich Bay Estate; Oldstairs Bay to St Margaret's Bay; South Foreland.
- (b) Medway Estuary and Swale SMP: Hoo Marina to Lower Upnor; Ham Green to East of Upchurch; Funton to Raspberry Hill; Medway Islands

## **Implications**

16. Budget/Financial implications: none direct to Kent County Council, however adoption of the plans may increase access to capital funding for flood defence works in the future.

17. Sustainability: the SMP is designed to balance the needs of people with the natural environment were possible. Because of the highly developed nature of the coastal strip, there is little opportunity to revert to a more natural coastline and some loss of intertidal area and beaches will have to be accepted in the long term. The SMP recommends continuing to allow the cliffs to erode where lives are not put at risk and has identified possible opportunities for intertidal habitat creation through managed realignment to offset loss of designated intertidal habitats. Detailed studies will be required in the future to ascertain the viability, timescales and impacts of implementing managed realignment.

18. Legal: the provision of coastal defences is a permissive power and operating authorities are not required to provide or maintain defences that are unsustainable. The South East Coastal Group and affected local authorities will be seeking clarification over possible property blight issues for residents intending to sell property where the medium or long-term policy is to realign the defences inland. A Defra policy report into coastal adaptation that will provide guidance on assistance to people who are affected by changes in coastal management policy is also awaited.

19. Planning Implications: relevant departments in Kent County Council will need to consider appropriate planning policy in areas where the medium or long-term policy is to realign the defences inland.

20. No other implications have been identified.

### **Consultations**

21. Public Consultation on the draft SMPs was undertaken between May and September 2007, resulting in 29 responses, incorporating 64 comments overall, to the two plans. As a result of the consultation no changes were made to the Medway Estuary and Swale SMP. The Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP had one change, which split the Faversham Creek to Seasalter policy unit into two sections and delayed the managed realignment in the Sportsman's Pub to Seasalter sub-section to the final epoch.

### **Local Members**

22. Local members affected by the policies have already been consulted on the SMP, through the elected member's forum.

### **Conclusion**

23. The SMPs have been prepared to a rigorous standard in strict accordance with national guidance and have been subject to consultation. Adoption of the SMPs will assist with the long term planning of the coastline and inform future plans and strategies of the county council and its partners. The plans have limited implications for people and property and will assist in attracting resources for essential flood defence works in the future.

24. It should be noted that the other relevant authorities have adopted the SMPs.

### **Recommendations**

25. E&R POC to support the endorsement and adoption by Cabinet of the Shoreline Management Plan, the preferred management policies and the Action Plan. Policies for managed realignment to be adopted under the understanding that these will be subject to further detailed investigation and consultation.

26. E&R POC to support the endorsement and adoption by Cabinet of the preferred management policy as a development planning consideration.

27. E&R POC to support the request to Cabinet that the Planning Committee note the policies within the SMP and take due regard of the coastal flooding and erosion risk areas when determining planning applications.

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Background Documents: Include ALL background information taken into account in preparing the report. *(This does not include previous Committee Reports)*

- (a) Isle of Grain to South Foreland Shoreline Management Plan, 2007
- (b) Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plan, 2007
- (c) SMP Consultation reports

Previous Committee Reference: *n/a*

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