

RFCC Coastal Members Annual Meeting

The Board Room, Bridlington Spa, East Riding of Yorkshire

12.00-13.00/Working Lunch

TOPIC: The Six Year Programme v's Local Authority Resources

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 With the recent and much welcomed longer term planning associated with the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Programme has also come a marked shift in emphasis for the delivery of many capital projects from the Environment Agency(EA) to Local Authority(LA) Risk Management Authorities(RMAs) .
- 1.2 The Programmes from each region of England are in many ways aspirational however there will be an expectation that if the funding is made available from the Exchequer and other sources then these projects will be delivered in a timely fashion.
- 1.3 This has come at a time of austerity where LA RMAs are being to asked to take significant steps to reduce their annual revenue budgets and to prioritise more than ever their Capital Reserves.

2.0 What does this mean?

- 2.1 In recent years LA RMAs have had to effect year on year efficiency savings to severely 'prune' their revenue budgets without reducing front line service provision. In addition they have had to draw on often limited Capital Reserves to support their respective Corporate Priorities across often broad portfolio of Services.
- 2.2 In addition the way in which FCERM Grant in Aid is made available to RMAs from the Exchequer has changed to encourage more contributions from other sources with the previous 100% Grant being largely withdrawn. The aim being that more projects will be taken forward.
- 2.3 Some of the projects on the 6 year programme are new, arising from Flood Risk Strategic Plans and Updated Shoreline Management Plans.

Others have been processed through periods of different funding availability and criteria/formulae than the current one.

- 2.4 What this means is that LA RMAs are probably now not best prepared to deliver on the FCERM Agenda but reluctant to admit that whilst they can list sites requiring intervention to help reduce Flood and Coastal risks there is a strong possibility that they won't have the resources to deliver.
- 2.5 The reduction in revenue funding has meant that in-house staffing has reduced ,often drastically, and which has been often targeted at those with the most experience/expertise in the now required disciplines. The result is that those that are left are either not qualified and/or inexperienced in such matters and/or simply overwhelmed by the amount of work required to be undertaken resulting in delays. Many RMAs have looked to outsource activities to the Private Sector but this relies upon principally Capital expenditure and leaves the RMAs potentially at risk from not having an 'informed Client' to monitor and direct the 'consultant'. Many RMAs will be risk averse to employing in-house staff unless there is Capital funding in part or in full to support their employment at least throughout the tenure of a project(s).
- 2.6 In terms of the Elected Members of LA RMAs they are being asked to consider FCERM set against massive competing demands where the risks of service failure are significant and on a daily basis and the consequences can be catastrophic across the whole of a sector or Community set against risks which can be transient and only potentially impact directly a smaller proportion of the local population.
- 3.0 How can this be addressed?
- 3.1 The RFCC Coastal Members Group is asked to reflect upon the above and if there is agreement to the background as set out to consider what can be done to address this issue?

John Riby

Yorkshire RFCC –Independent Coastal Member-April 2014