

Briefing Paper

THE FUTURE OF SECCRAG

Introduction

SECCRAG was established as part of the COREPOINT project to provide a science input with a wider regional base, drawing in scientists and policy makers with an interest in the Severn region. This function has continued to develop under the aegis of the IMCORE project. For both projects the emphasis has remained on climate change.

Options

It is now time to consider options for the future of SECCRAG, bearing in mind that the group has achieved a functionality and coherence of its own. These options include:

- Winding SECCRAG up at the conclusion of the IMCORE project in October 2011.
- Continuation as a specialist science group organised by members of the network. Such an arrangement could be initiated by Cardiff University, for example, which would provide the secretariat, with organisation thereby continued at the behest of the members e.g. a rotating secretariat. Financial commitment would be minimal and mainly carried by the members acting in their professional capacities.
- Continuation as a specialist science group under the aegis of the SEP, who would provide the secretariat. Financial commitment would be similarly minimal. SEP would provide a ready-made link with all the stakeholders, including the universities, major industries, local authorities and government agencies.
- Continuation as a more formally organised and funded group along the lines of e.g. the Sullom Voe Environmental Advisory Group. SVEAG was established in the 1970s to conduct baseline surveys and ongoing environmental monitoring, by the stakeholders, principally the terminal operators, local authority and local university, which provided the chair. Funding came principally from the terminal operators. Apart from the Severn Barrage, there is no single large industrial project of this kind on the Severn; however, there is a range of smaller scale large projects. Such a group would be able to commission research in co-operation with research conducted by other stakeholders and/or co-ordinate and facilitate research more generally.
- Continuation as part of a future project or projects along present lines.

Name and Purpose

Climate change is just one of several major science objectives which may be envisaged. Baseline surveys and monitoring are necessary for large projects including coast protection and flood defence, rural drainage schemes, major industrial installations and urban development. Another major science objective is research projects *per se*. Indeed in the medium and long term it is these other projects which will require more investment. Some of this investment has already been made or is ongoing by local authorities, government agencies and industries.

Under these circumstances consideration may be given to re-naming the Group e.g. as a Severn Science Group with a remit which can respond to the wider application of science to the development and management of the Estuary. This would make sense in the context of the coherence of estuary management implied by the SEP approach, together with the further development of land and sea spatial planning. It could be a UK-wide model.

Recommendations

- Clarify the purpose and name;
- Select one of the above options – or a hybrid – from those outlined above.
- Consult with stakeholders.
- Make a recommendation and arrangements for the future in the course of 2011, before the winding up of IMCORE. Both COREPOINT and IMCORE have already fulfilled the INTERREG regional development objective of capacity building, something which it may be valuable to secure for the future.