

LGA COASTAL SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Last updated May 2025

1. VISION

The Vision of the Coastal Special Interest Group (“the Group”) is:

- 1.1 To be the go-to voice of our unique coastal, estuarine and maritime communities to make them thriving and resilient for the future.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Objectives of the Group are:

- 2.1 To increase awareness and debate at a national level of the environmental, economic and social issues that directly or indirectly impact coastal, estuarine and maritime communities;
- 2.2 To act as a focus for liaison between member local authorities and other bodies representing coastal, estuarine and maritime interests;
- 2.3 To secure improved cross-departmental co-ordination with Government on coastal, estuarine and maritime issues with a view to ensuring consistency in policy and the provision of resource;
- 2.4 To work in partnership with other organisations with complementary aims to support coastal, estuarine and maritime communities;
- 2.5 The Groups' annual Strategic Priorities to deliver these objectives are to be reviewed each March meeting for agreement as deliverables within the Group's Forward Workplan at the September Annual General Meeting.

3. KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

The key accountabilities of the Group are:

- 3.1 Raising the profile of the challenges, issues and opportunities faced by coastal, estuarine and maritime communities;
- 3.2 Representing the best interests of local authority members across all opportunities, with a primary focus for those located in England as in-house expertise allows;
- 3.3 Acting as a discussion forum for issues raised, with a view to reaching a consensus of opinion where required and preparing discussion papers or inviting presentations on issues of specific interest to coastal, estuarine and maritime communities;
- 3.4 Liaising with other Special Interest Groups, LGA Boards and Executive of the LGA, and delivering for coastal, estuarine and maritime communities by developing and maintaining strong collaborative partnerships;
- 3.5 Making representations to Government, in so far as they are consistent with and will not conflict with or undermine LGA policy as a whole or damage the interests of other

member authorities, to ensure that issues affecting coastal, estuarine and maritime communities are reflected in Government policy and the result is an adequate distribution of funding/resources;

- 3.5 Maintaining an annual Workplan formed around the Groups' Strategic Priorities to be agreed each year, normally at the March meeting;
- 3.6 To uphold the Nolan Principles of Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

4. MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 Membership of the Group shall be open to all those authorities with an interest in coastal, estuarine and maritime issues who are also members of the LGA or are associate members of the LGA (i.e. Local authorities in Wales). A minimum of 5 local authorities are required to maintain the status as an LGA Special Interest Group;
- 4.2 Membership of the Coastal Special Interest Group is through a subscription basis for local authorities. Subscription fees will be reviewed prior to each election by a Subscriptions Working Group chaired by a Lead Member Representative. Subscription fees were reviewed in September 2022 and agreed at the December meeting as:
 - Unitary
 - County
 - Borough/District

Any local authorities who wish to join the LGA Coastal SIG but are unable to meet the set subscription fees should write to the Chair of the Coastal SIG's Funding Group outlining their position and any fee reductions will be discussed by the Funding Panel who will then bring any fee reduction requests to the full SIG membership to approve.

- 4.3 There are no fees for external organisations as they are considered as "partners", essential in the delivery of the Groups objectives;
- 4.4 The host lead authority is exempt from subscription fee payments;
- 4.5 Each full member authority may nominate one Councillor to represent the authority at any meetings of the Group, who shall be the councils "Lead" Member Representative. Each member authority may nominate a deputy or "sub" Councillor to represent the authority at any meetings of the Group at which the nominated representative cannot attend. The Lead and Deputy Member Representatives hold the right to vote on matters such as Chair and Vice Chair elections, with one vote per local authority permitted. Should either the Lead or Deputy be unavailable, the council should nominate another Elected Member to attend meetings on their behalf on an *ad hoc* basis, however this Elected Member does not hold voting rights, these can be transferred to the Lead Officer representative (see 4.6 for further details). Member representatives may be portfolio holders for related issues in their home authorities or have experience/knowledge of, and special interest and commitment to, coastal issues;
- 4.6 Each full member authority may nominate one officer to represent the authority at any meetings of the Group, who shall be the councils "Lead" Officer representative. Each member authority may nominate a deputy or "sub" officer to represent the authority at any meetings of the Group at which the nominated representative cannot attend.

Officer representatives must have responsibility for and experience/knowledge of coastal issues. Officers do not hold voting rights on behalf of their council, however should a council require the nominated Lead Officer to vote on their behalf, due to circumstances preventing the attendance of the nominated Elected Member (Lead or Deputy) they must inform the Secretariat and Chair ahead of an upcoming meeting.

- 4.7 Associate memberships are available to all Associate Members of the Local Government Association. Associate members do not have voting rights nor are they able to influence the workplan of the LGA Coastal SIG. Associate members are able to access all other benefits.
- 4.8 All representatives to the Group are expected to uphold the Nolan Principles of Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. Where any representative fails to uphold these principles, a complaint will be submitted to the relevant authority at the Chairs discretion.

5.0 MEETINGS AND LEADERSHIP

- 5.1 The LGA Coastal SIG is hosted by a host lead authority; the host lead authority is established through election of a chair.
- 5.2 The Group shall meet quarterly throughout the year, with two meetings being held by video conference, one via hybrid facilities (where possible) and one as in-person only with the September meeting acting as the Groups' Annual General Meeting (AGM). A 'Field Meeting' of the Group will be held in an agreed coastal location, usually hosted by a local authority member. The 'Field Meeting' will be serviced by the host authority and a financial contribution, not exceeding £1000 without prior approval from the membership, will be provided to the host authority from the Group's Treasury;
- 5.3 The Senior Officer's Group "SIGSOG" shall normally meet within two weeks prior of the date of the next Group meeting. Three meetings per year will be held by video conference and one in-person (if possible);
- 5.4 The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected in separate ballots by the Group, each of which will serve for a maximum period of 3 years, before elections will be undertaken; the next election is due September 2025.
- 5.5 In the event of extraordinary circumstances such as resignation, death, loss of seat etc. The Vice Chair will become Chair of the LGA Coastal SIG for the remaining election term with Secretariat support provided from the previous host authority for a period of 6 months. After this time the Vice Chair will provide secretariat support for the group as the new host authority. Where the Vice Chair is unable to provide this support, the host authority will trigger an election process immediately.
- 5.6 The elections will normally take place at the September Annual General Meeting and where a new Chair is elected, the new Chair will take up the post in the following April, allowing for a 6-month handover period.
- 5.7 Where a new Chair resides from a new local authority the host authority will hand over the financial responsibilities and Secretariat role to the new authority. The new authority will commence the host authority role on the 1st April.
- 5.8 The Chair and Vice Chair should be drawn from different geographical regions of England when possible;

- 5.9 The Chair will be responsible for chairing the Group's meetings and to represent the interests of the national Group at other fora and to lead any deputations, as required by the interests of the Group. In the absence/non availability of the Chair, the Vice Chair will assume these responsibilities. Neither the Chair nor Vice Chair are permitted to use their role for local gain. In addition, the Chair/Vice Chair may from time to time be invited to attend the Senior Officers Group meeting to provide a Members input upon the work stream;
- 5.10 The Chair/Vice Chair must each have a dedicated Officer support. The Officer supporting the Chair will be from the Chair's Council and act as Lead Officer to the Group and will also chair the Senior Officers Group. The officer supporting the Vice Chair will be from the Vice Chair's Council & will participate in the Senior Officers Group and will chair the Senior Officers Group and act as Lead Officer to the Group if the Vice Chair becomes the Chair of the Group or in the absence of the Lead Officer;4.8
- 5.11 The LGA will provide secretarial support to the Group, where requested by the lead authority, including the co-ordination and despatch of agendas, reports on areas of LGA policy and taking of minutes when the Group meeting is held at the LGA offices. The LGA will not undertake to support the 'Field Meeting' in the taking of minutes but will coordinate and dispatch the agenda papers. The responsibility for the production of the minutes for the 'Field Meeting' will be that of the host authority;
- 5.12 Each member authority shall have one vote on any matter upon which a decision is required. In the event that there is an equality of votes the person presiding at the meeting as the Chair shall have a final and casting vote.
- 5.13 Where any attendee behaves in a manner that contravenes the Nolan Principles, the Chair and the Lead Officer are permitted to either remove said attendee from an online meeting or adjourn an in-person meeting to allow the attendee to leave. Such actions will be followed by a complaint from the Chair to the council or organisation which the attendee represents.

6. SUB-GROUP

- 6.1 From time to time the Group shall consider whether it would be expedient for detailed consideration of an issue to be undertaken by a Sub-Group ("working group or Task & Finish Group depending upon the nature of the issue);
- 6.2 The Group shall decide the membership and responsibilities of any Sub-Group at the time that the decision is taken to set up the Sub-Group;
- 6.3 The Group shall also engage with other external Bodies to assist in consultation and development of the Group's work programme;
- 6.4 Where appropriate, a "Sub-Group" will be chaired by a Member Representative who will be supported by an Officer Representative. Where these roles are more permanent in nature, the Member Representative will be elected as the "Member Champion" and Supported by at least one "Officer Lead";
- 6.5 As a Member Champion, the Member is expected to undertake regular meetings (at least twice per year) with the Officer Lead(s), Chair the Sub-Group meetings (where applicable), keep updated with relevant matters relating to the purpose of the Sub-Group, attend applicable external meetings and act as a representative of the national

Group. Where the Member Champion is unable to attend external meetings, the Chair/Vice Chair should attend in their place and be appropriately briefed;

- 6.6 As an Officer Lead, the Officer is expected to regularly update the Member Champion (at least twice per year) with relevant information, support their role as Chair by organising the agendas of meetings and general administration of the Sub-Group, attend applicable external meetings and act as a representative of the national Group. Where the Officer Lead is unable to attend external meetings, the Lead Officer should attend in their place and be appropriately briefed;
- 6.7 Member Champions and Officer Leads are not permitted to use their roles within the Group for local gain;
- 6.8 Member Champions and Officer Leads are elected by the Chair through an application process when such roles become available and are accountable to the Chair and wider Group. When either role intends to step down, the Chair should be informed immediately with a suggested notice period of one month to allow for smooth transition to new representatives in order to maintain progress in these work areas;
- 6.9 Where Member Champions/Officer Leads do not deliver 5.5 and 5.8, the Chair reserves the right to replace Member/Officer representatives, particularly where lack of engagement occurs over a period of time greater than 3 months;
- 6.10 For Sub-Groups relating to the Group's work themes, a minimum of two meetings shall be held each year with one meeting set to provide a forum for agreement of the Sub-Group's workplan. External partner organisations should be permitted to attend the meetings of Sub-Groups (where appropriate) to support the objectives of the Group.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

- 7.1 The Group shall determine its annual priorities and Work Plan through consultation with members and sub-groups. It should be brought to the Group for approval at a meeting, normally in September at the Annual General Meeting with the review beginning at the end March;
- 7.2 The Group shall keep the work plan for the year under review and treat it as a living document whereby they may amend, alter, add to or make deletions from the work plan and programme as circumstances dictate;
- 7.3 The Chair, under consultation with the Lead Officer, may appoint Member Champions or Officer Leads to help deliver the work programme. These roles may require the support of a Sub-Group (see Section 6 above) or may be delivered without the support of a Sub-Group depending upon the nature of the issue.

8. REPORTING

The Group will at all times communicate with, advise, and influence the work of the LGA. In particular the Group will: -

- 8.1 Report to the LGA Executive through the presentation of an Annual Report due in June of each year. The Annual Report will report on progress since the preparation of the previous Annual Report and identify the issues that need to be pursued further by the

LGA. This Report will be made available through the Group's website to aid transparency;

- 8.2 Provide copies of reports of the Group's meetings for information to the LGA Executive and others as requested;
- 8.3 Authorise the Chair or Vice Chair of the Group to approve draft reports, prior to consideration by the Group, in order to meet specific time constraints set;
- 8.4 Utilise its website to post relevant reports and other information approved by the Group.

9. FINANCE

- 9.1 The Host Authority will agree a suitably qualified and experienced officer to act as its Treasurer with funds held by their local authority. They will provide the necessary advice on the Group's finances, costs of work plans, setting of subscription fees etc and will provide the Group with regular reports thereon. They will be responsible for collecting subscriptions fees, in April for the financial year; it is the member local authority's responsibility to raise purchase order numbers to support this process in a timely manner;
- 9.2 Member authorities are expected to provide a purchase order number prior to renewal and will pay subscription fees in a timely manner on presentation of the invoice (expected within 30 days). It is assumed that member authorities are renewing their subscription unless the Secretariat is notified by the Lead Member Representative of the member authority by 30th March of the previous financial year.
- 9.3 All travelling and subsistence allowances incurred by Councillors/Officers representing member authorities at the quarterly meetings of the Group shall be the responsibility of the member authority concerned;
- 9.4 Any Councillor/Officer specifically requested by the Group to represent the Group at other fora and meetings will be entitled to claim and recover reasonable expenses from the Group's budget. Any person attending such fora and meetings will be required to report to the Group meeting at the earliest practicable opportunity;
- 9.5 An agreed honorarium will be paid annually to the Chair and Lead Officer of the Group in recognition of their roles and demand on their time;
- 9.6 Any external funding to the Group should be shown on the bi-annual and annual treasury reports under the heading of "External funding". The sources of funding must be in line with the LGAs rules for Special Interest Groups and must not influence the delivery of work by the Group.

10. REVIEW

- 10.1 These terms of reference and their operation shall be subject to periodic review by the Group, with a minimum review time of 3 years. Regular updates will be made where required following approval by membership.

