



COMMUNITIES AT RISK

PLANNING FOR A FUTURE WITH A CHANGING COASTLINE

Information Pack

Our Challenge

The consequences of coastal erosion and flooding have affected the communities of North Norfolk for Millennia. Within the past hundred years, however, settlements have built up behind coastal defences. It is becoming increasingly expensive to maintain those defences, as well as being technically difficult to do so in the face of rising sea levels. Decisions around investment in coast defences are made in the light of Shoreline Management Plans (SMP's) prepared locally for sections of the coast. These plans forecast the effects of 'coastal change' but do not include provisions for addressing its consequences. North Norfolk was one of three national pilots in developing the second round SMP for the central and eastern part of the District and this plan reflects the shift in coastal management policy away from coastal defence, towards a coast that functions more naturally.

The impacts of the physical effects of coastal erosion are dramatic, as can be witnessed at Happisburgh, but the impacts merely of the publication of the SMP are equally severe – stifling property investment and 'blighting' extensive areas of coastal settlements. As well as the obvious environmental consequences, coastal change has a drastic consequence for the economy of large parts of North Norfolk and for the communities that depend upon it. These effects will increase in severity into the future as more and more sea defences fail due to lack of investment and as storms become more frequent and severe (predicted as a result of climate change).

North Norfolk District Council is taking an innovative approach towards tackling these issues though integrating services locally, forging partnerships, working with Defra, the Environment Agency and the Government Office for the East of England (GO East) on the development of new initiatives, and perhaps above all engaging with local communities. Progress is being made but there is much still to be done.

Coastal Defences

The Council has amended the SMP to include measures it believes must be implemented in order to make the plan acceptable. It is also undertaking a programme of work in order to extend the life of defences in certain 'crunch' locations to 'buy time' for affected communities whilst mitigation and adaptation measures are being developed.

Technical

Further work is needed to understand the effects of intermittent defence; where straight lines of defence at certain locations lead to increased rates of erosion at others (Happisburgh is an example of this).

Socio-Economic

There are serious concerns with regard to the SMP's economic analysis and justification, not just in relation to the value of individual property. The real value of communities is not taken into consideration, for example social infrastructure, heritage and the benefits of coastal businesses to the local economy (Overstrand is a classic case). NNDC has worked in partnership with the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change in exploring these impacts at some length.

Social Justice

When the decision is taken not to defend a community some other measures must surely be put in place in the interests of social justice in order to safeguard the interests of those affected, i.e. *adaptation* must take the place of protection, not abandonment. (See attached paper to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Coastal and Marine Issues)

Planning (Local Development Framework (LDF))

As a council we need to reconcile the problems of a dynamic, changing coastline with the certainty required by the development industry. We need to ensure that development is restricted in areas at risk but that this does not stifle investment decisions that would support threatened communities that are in need of regeneration. A workable planning system therefore depends on a balance and the Council has adopted a policy framework for this in its Core Strategy (part of the LDF).

Ongoing Activities

- NNDC is formulating a '**Coastal Management Plan**' which it is hoped will coordinate all the necessary actions to ensure that the implications of coastal change are managed in an effective and integrated fashion.
- We have held workshops with communities in five coastal settlements in order to develop issues and options and to inform **coastal planning** decisions.
- We have explored the consequences of the SMP through work undertaken by the Tyndall Centre and have instigated **further studies** to test practical mechanisms for implementing adaptation.
- We are also engaged in discussions about governance of coastal issues and the development of **Integrated Coastal Zone Management** - a national target based upon a European initiative, but output is slow in coming.
- The Council is an active member of the LGA's **Coastal Special interest Group**, of which Cllr Clive Stockton (the Coastal Portfolio Holder) is Vice Chair.
- The Council's Head of Coastal Strategy represents the LGA on Defra's **Adaptation Board**.
- We are developing **partnerships** with other authorities through a project funded by the Regional Centre of Excellence in order to achieve best value in responding to the increasing demand on resources and the scarcity of expertise.

The Way Ahead

There is no precedent for much of the work the Council is doing on coastal management planning and we need help! We have stretched our own resources to the limit (both creative and financial) and are anxious to garner support through emerging national and regional initiatives in order to move from ideas to action.

- We are therefore keen to see North Norfolk benefiting from the impending **adaptation fund** (announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review) perhaps as a pilot for adaptation projects.
- We are also keen to work with GO East and to seek support from the emerging **East of England Coastal Initiative**.
- We wish to progress the **regeneration** of many of our coastal communities that are threatened by the loss of some of their key assets and therefore need to engage with the East of England Development Agency (EEDA).
- We are keen to see progress on the development of a national process of **Integrated Coastal Zone Management** (ICZM) which provides a framework for consistent decision making in relation to coast protection policy, spatial planning (both on land and at sea), adaptation to coastal change (particularly in the face of sea level rise) and infrastructure and utilities planning.

Domestic adaptation: flood risk management 7.58 The Stern Review and the 2004 *Foresight Future Flooding* report both highlighted that climate change in the UK is likely to increase the severity and frequency of flooding events. In line with this, total Government expenditure on flood and coastal erosion risk management will rise from £600 million in 2007-08 to £800 million in 2010-11. The Government will also introduce an adaptation toolkit of £10 million per year, to assist communities in adapting to change where constructing defences is not the most appropriate means of managing flood and coastal erosion risk.

Extract from the 2007 Pre-Budget report and Comprehensive Spending Review

Launch of The East of England Coastal Initiative (July 07)



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Project Aims

This project, aims to use the coast and its associated assets as a tool to build economic opportunities to address the socio-economic needs of the most deprived communities and to bring a more refined approach to consideration of managing the effects of changing climate and our changing coastline.

Background to Coastal Management in North Norfolk

Overview

“Several witnesses drew attention to the risks to which coastal communities are exposed as a consequence of climate change - rising sea levels, more frequent and more severe flooding, coastline erosion and increased frequency and intensity of storms. According to the Environment Agency “by 2080 the UK could be facing major flood events once every three years compared to every one hundred years in the past”, putting one million people in coastal communities and £120 billions worth of infrastructure at risk.”

“The severity of these risks is not uniform around the coastline. Some areas face significant levels of risk: the Environment Agency told us that areas such as “the Humber or at Happisburgh or around the Essex coast” would be “in the frontline of the impacts of climate change”. It also stated that flood risk will rise by at least 30% around our southern and eastern coasts.”

(House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee: Coastal Towns (March 2007))

North Norfolk District Council has a coastal frontage of 68km (42 miles). No point in the District is more than 23km (15 miles) from the coast. It therefore features highly in the psyche of local people, is an important characteristic of the local environment and contributes hugely to the economic life of the District.

The Council exercises its Coast Protection powers over 34km of its frontage with the Environment Agency managing the remainder. Currently 22km is defended, mostly with concrete walls or timber & steel revetments. The replacement value of these assets is £90 million. The Council’s maintenance budget is normally £350,000 per annum, but this has been increased recently to £550,000 in order to fund a programme of “buying time” to enable coastal communities in the most vulnerable areas to adapt to the consequences of the changes predicted in the review of the Kelling to Lowestoft Shoreline Management Plan (SMP).

The first SMP was adopted by the Council in 1996. The policies largely reflected current practices, promoting policies of “hold the line” for all of its developed frontages. In practice some of these policies were undeliverable because defence schemes failed to meet economic criteria. It is doubtful whether they could ever have been considered sustainable in terms of coastal processes.



*Offshore reefs
at Sea Palling*

The review of the SMP reflected the national moves towards the development of policies that could be regarded as more sustainable. It advocated policies that, in process and simple economic terms, are believed to be sustainable over the next 100 years. The consequences of this, however, are likely to be severe, affecting and threatening:

- the wellbeing of coastal communities
- important habitats and landscapes
- important cultural and historic assets
- key infrastructure
- recreational resources and tourist attractions
- the economy of the immediate coastal area and the wider district

The publication of this document introduced a blighting effect on the areas at risk and therefore in many cases local communities have become affected far in advance of the physical impact of erosion or flooding.

“The consequences of the long-term Management Plan for this coast should not be understated. However, the inevitability of necessary change to past policies needs to be recognised. Continued defence, as in the past, is unsustainable in the long-term and it is unrealistic to present policies that indicate continued defence of an area where this is unlikely to be sustainable or economically justifiable.”

“To achieve this change will, however, require consideration of the consequences at various levels of planning and government. There will be matters that need to be debated at a national level, as the issues that have been identified by this Plan will exist several times over around the UK. It is not possible to achieve complete sustainability from all perspectives and, quite probably, national policies will need to be developed to help resolve the dichotomies.”

(Kelling to Lowestoft Ness SMP First Review (November 2006))

The review of the Hunstanton to Kelling SMP has recently commenced. It is expected that this review will generate similar policy changes and therefore consequences.

The SMP process does not give rise to the mechanisms for addressing the consequences of the policies contained in them. The Council has therefore sought to explore the options that are available through the emerging projects under ‘Making Space for Water’ and through the Local Development Framework.

The Kelling to Lowestoft SMP, as originally prepared, cannot be adopted by the Council until a clear way forward has been worked out, that is acceptable locally and properly resourced. The Council has therefore amended the plan giving conditions for approval of the original Plan. The purpose, when combined with the additional work under the programme of buying time, is to facilitate adaptation to the consequences of a changing coastline whilst minimising the stress felt by local communities, the local economy and the environment in the coastal area.



Salthouse after the November 2007 Storm Surge

Adaptation

Where the decision has been taken to move from a position of defence to retreat it is necessary to manage the impacts on the environment, on communities and on the economy and infrastructure on which they depend. Nationally the Council is engaged in the development of the 'adaptation toolkit', under the umbrella of Defra's Making Space for Water programme, and regionally in the East of England Coastal Initiative. Locally we have developed spatial planning policies and proposals (in the adopted LDF Core Strategy) and have commissioned studies to investigate the feasibility of practical mechanisms for implementing adaptation measures.

Coastal Management Plan

The Council wishes to work closely with Central Government and its agencies towards developing a sustainable coast (in which the natural coastal processes are balanced with the environmental, social and economic imperatives for the area). In order to achieve this longer-term aim we need to develop partnerships and to engage stakeholders in the development of a shared vision. The Council is thus beginning to develop a 'Coastal Management Plan' as a vehicle for drawing together the many plans, strategies and initiatives affecting the coast, and to serve as a tool to connect with and gain the trust of people locally.

The Council ran a series of workshops in coastal villages in the autumn of 2007, to try and understand the implications of coastal change from the local communities'

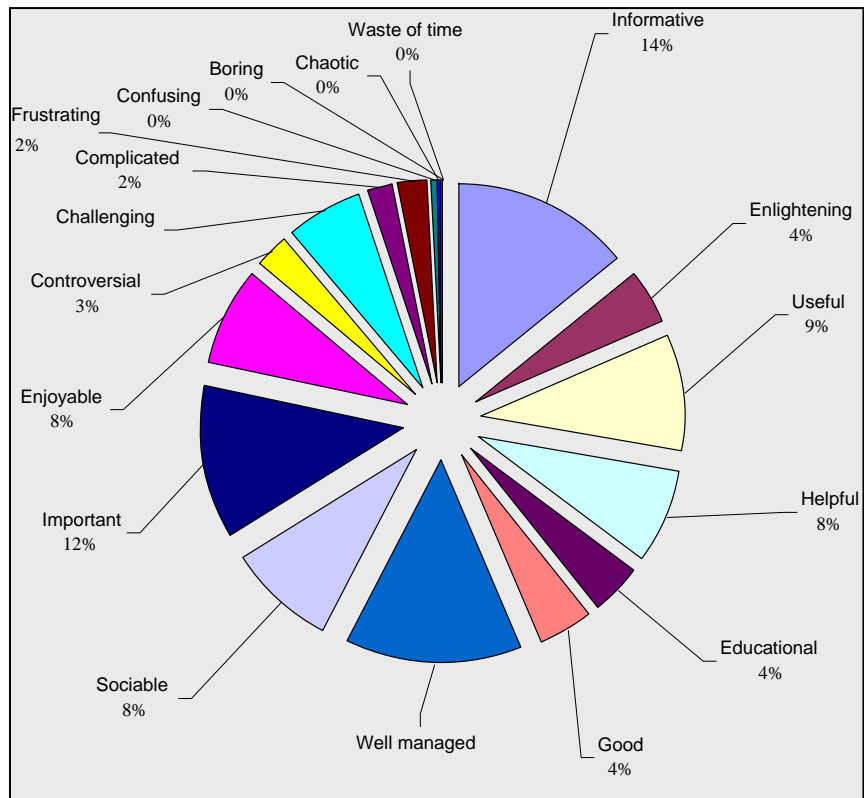
perspectives and to discuss options for safeguarding their futures. Above all, these sessions helped to establish a dialogue with key representatives of these communities, which is a valuable step towards being able to develop initiatives that will address the complex problems that are faced.

In all cases it was clear that the future of these coastal settlements is very closely linked to the sea and that their futures cannot be planned independently to the coastline. Spatial planning proposals, aimed at safeguarding the future of each village, cannot therefore be made in isolation but have to be holistic in their nature; that is, proposals should attempt to address the consequences of the changing coastline as well as plan to meet the wider needs of each settlement.



A coastal workshop at Overstrand

These workshops were well received by participants and proved to be a valuable method of engagement, as shown by the views expressed in this chart.



The next step in the development of the Coastal Management Plan is to extend this 'conversation' to communities and interest groups along the whole of our coast to help tailor our response to the challenges we face in a way that is sensitive to local needs. This workshop is planned for November 2008.

Regeneration

Coastal communities are unique. They are often at the end of transport links and their hinterland is usually restricted to 180°. The economic issues faced by coastal communities were examined at length last year in the report to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee: Coastal Towns (March 2007) and are well presented in the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group's publication, 'On The Edge'.



Cromer seafront

Locally, £4.8 million has been spent on regeneration of the Cromer sea front, with a further £2 million in the town centre. The 'Sheringham Plus' regeneration initiative is similarly working on town centre and sea front schemes. However, many other smaller communities are also in great need of regeneration and support, and at the present time little or no funds are available.



The coastal village of Mundesley

Paper Presented to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Coastal and Marine Issues

Thursday 25th January 2007 – Grimond Room, Portcullis House, Westminster

The Big Debate:

Factors influencing policy for flood management and erosion risk at the coast

A short presentation on the issue of Social Justice - Dr Clive Stockton

Presented on behalf of the Local Government Association - Coastal Issues Special Interest Group

In the cold light of day **Social Justice** seems to be the issue – that being debated here today. However for those who stand to lose everything to coastal erosion (or indeed flooding – although there is a significant difference which I will come back to) the issue is the mirror image – **injustice** – a very real and emotive injustice felt keenly and most commonly expressed in terms of two primary issues:-

- (i) Firstly in a local coastal context, it is considered grossly unjust that those who invested their all in communities which were defended, and for which the future policy was defined officially and publicly as being that of continued defence, can now find themselves victims of a change of policy to no defence and “natural” process. Where is the duty of care?
- (ii) Secondly, and on a broader front, there is a powerful view that the issues of climate change, which are largely driving the change of policy from defence to natural process, are now increasingly being shown to be the responsibility of all, whilst the immediate coastal consequences are being visited upon the single generation who happen to live and trade at the coast now. Where is the shared social responsibility?

Further, in terms of a document such as the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), which is now highlighting the changes in coastal defence policy and which looks forward for 100 years, it is considered by many to be seriously perverse that some communities are already suffering severe losses without any time or thought-out process for help with adaptation. This is particularly acute and unjust in cases where localised failure of existing defences, between or next to more robust defences, results in massively accelerated erosion rates and seriously shortened timescales for survival. Where is the “natural process”? A long term plan with such drastic consequences must surely, it is argued, address those consequences.

It is I think important at this point to **differentiate between flood risk and coastal erosion**. There is the possibility of a degree of self help in the case of flood risk (e.g. insurance) – no such case applies to coastal erosion – self help is not an option. **Flood is a risk – erosion is a certainty!**

How does that erosion certainty manifest itself in terms of social justice? What is the process? Well, it starts the day that a policy change confirms the intention to abandon or remove sea defences – for example through the publication of a Shoreline Management Plan! All normal commercial processes relating to property and community values are called into question – a creeping blight begins – house prices fall and the ability to sell at all arises as properties become unmortgageable and uninsurable. Businesses suffer a similar fate but with the added complication of grossly reducing asset values which threaten security for business finance.

There is a catastrophic loss at the end – but it is at the end of a very painful and increasingly intolerable trap. I believe that there is no other circumstance within our society where individuals and communities can suffer in such a way through no fault of their own, and unaided. In recent years much has been made of the need for socially equitable policies for vulnerable communities and it has been a Government policy to address deprivation as a priority. Whilst at face value many coastal communities can appear idyllic there are strong correlations between coastal erosion and areas of deprivation in some places – the area of North Norfolk is an example.

Further to this last point, and to finish this short presentation, I must make the point that: - ***For almost everyone the total loss of one's home (and sometimes business as well) puts one automatically in the category of being vulnerable and deprived.***

Councillor Dr Clive Stockton

Presented on behalf of the Local Government Association - Coastal Issues Special Interest Group

Kelling to Cromer Shoreline Management Plan

Foreword

North Norfolk District Council is committed to working for a long term coastal plan which is sustainable, but which also properly values our coastal communities, their economic future, their heritage and those who live in them.

The original of this Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) document, published for consultation in December 2004, was considered unacceptable by this Council and this was supported by some 2500 objectors who responded in writing.

It is understood that a sustainable coastal solution must be found and it must include both a variety of coastal defences and a range of management policies, including mitigation measures where long term defence is neither practical nor desirable. However, for this to be achieved, for our coastal communities to be properly valued and for their legitimate aspirations to be accounted for, we believe that the SMP must re-address a number of key issues and this, our version, does just that.

Further we believe that this SMP version is in line with the Government's own five key sustainability principles that it wishes to see applied across all policies. Our alterations to the SMP have both technical and economic aspects, together with conditional requirements broadly summarised as "social justice issues".

An acceptable SMP is an essential document in ensuring sustainable coastal planning, but it cannot exist in isolation without addressing the catastrophic consequences of its own conclusions. We believe that this version of the SMP indicates a way forward in recognising these consequences and proposing conditional acceptance. We urge others to consider this as the basis for progress and for implementing those measures needed to satisfy the conditions stated.



Councillor Clive Stockton

Cabinet holder with responsibility for Planning Policy, Housing, Coastal Management and Economic & Tourism Development

Member of North Norfolk District Council for Waterside Ward

