

The Wash East Coastal Management Strategy (WECMS)

Briefing

January 2016.

This briefing provides an overview of the approach taken and recommendations made by the Wash East Coastal Management Strategy.

Background

The WECMS was implemented as a result of The Wash Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). The final Wash Shoreline Management Plan covering the coast from Gibraltar Point to Old Hunstanton can be viewed at the East Anglia Coastal Group website:
www.eacg.org.uk/smp4.asp

The SMP identified that due to uncertainties about the impact of climate change and availability of future national funding it could not set out a clear policy for the future management and maintenance of the sea defences between Old Hunstanton and Wolferton Creek. The WECMS which started in 2010, is supported by the Borough Council, Natural England, Anglian Water and the East Wash Coastal Management Community Interest Company and was approved by the Environment Agency's Large Projects Review process in summer 2015.

The Wash East Coastal Management Strategy approach

The Strategy covers the coast from the northern end of the cliffs at Old Hunstanton to the River Ingol outfall at Wolferton Creek. It is a joint Environment Agency and Borough Council project to look at the whole frontage and develop an integrated plan for the future management of the sea defences and adjacent land.

The Strategy sets out options for the future management of the coast in the short to medium term i.e. 25 to 50 years.

The Strategy has been developed with the support and advice of a Key Stakeholder Group (KSG) and an Advisory Group (AG) made up of representatives covering caravan park owners, beach bungalow owners, Parish and Town Councils, landowners, traders, cliff-top property owners and conservation bodies.

The KSG was formed to ensure that local interested parties could be fully involved with the relevant authorities to look at options for the future management of the coast, including how it could be funded, and agree preferred options.

The project team worked with the support of members of the KSG and AG, to develop the following project objectives:

To determine a sustainable approach to flood and erosion risk management for the people, property and environment between Hunstanton Cliffs and Wolferton Creek;

To identify and promote a coastal management approach that balances technical, environmental, economic and social issues for The Wash East frontage;

To improve our knowledge of relevant coastal processes, where necessary, to inform key project decisions and the study completion;

To improve public understanding of coastal management issues for Wash East, to gain public support for any changes in approach to coastal management and to pursue possible partnership funding mechanisms; and

To identify appropriate responsibility for future coastal management.

More generally the Strategy looked at:

- A better understanding of coastal processes
- A sustainable, long-term management plan for the whole frontage
- Availability of Government funding and possible local funding mechanisms to make up any shortfall.

As the Strategy was being developed meetings were held with the Advisory Group to obtain local knowledge and gain an understanding of local issues and concerns.

At key stages in the project meetings were held with the KSG to review progress and gain consensus before moving on to the next stage.

Public Drop-in sessions were held in July 2012 at Hunstanton and Heacham to present progress and obtain public opinion on the options being considered.

In July/August 2014 public drop-in sessions were held in Hunstanton, Heacham and Snettisham as part of the public consultation on the draft final strategy.

Strategy development

The coast was divided into three units, each chosen for their distinct geographical features and categorised by their key challenges:

Unit A: Hunstanton Cliffs

- Rates and impact of erosion;
- Supply of beach material to units B & C.

Unit B: Hunstanton Town

- The management action needed to sustain the Hold the Line policy for this frontage;

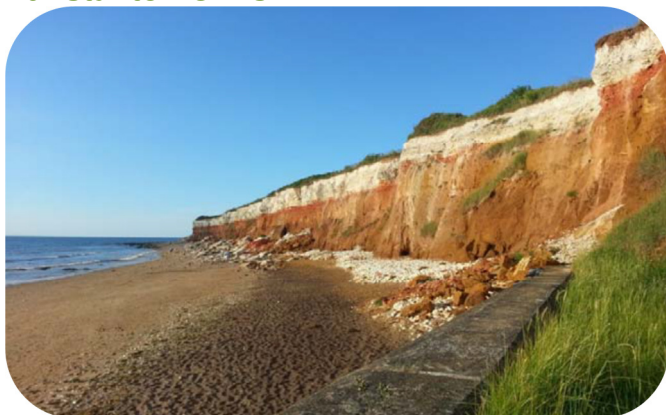
Unit C

- Sustainability of the current beach recycling process



The Wash East Coastal Management Strategy Final Options

Hunstanton Cliffs



The Strategy has determined that the approach to manage erosion is to pilot a range of low cost options that reduce erosion caused by wave action at specific locations. The purpose of erosion reduction options

would be to reduce wave attack at the base of the cliffs during regular tides and small storms.

The erosion reduction options will be focused on short lengths of cliff and aim to slow down erosion which threatens the historic features and the cliff top which the local community considers to be of high value. However it also ensures that some erosion continues to maintain the fresh geological cliff face that Hunstanton cliffs are so well known for and for which they are designated.

The erosion reduction options have been considered based on the impact on the beach and cliffs and are in line with the conservation objectives for the cliffs' SSSI status and potential for local community involvement. Each option will undergo a detailed assessment to ensure no detrimental effect to the cliffs as a result of implementation, operation or removal of these options.

The following methods, in order of preference, are proposed for the pilot:

1. Base netting
2. Sand bags
3. Gabions (rock filled wire baskets)
4. Rock sill

Consideration should also be given to drainage on the cliff top which may also contribute to cliff falls following erosion at the cliff toe.

Hunstanton Town



The recommended approach for Unit B is to hold the line by maintaining the promenade and sea walls, including maintaining the groyne, as they currently are.

A Hunstanton Sea Wall and Promenade Condition Survey undertaken in 2012 found that the estimated life span of some lengths of the sea wall is between 15 and 20 years. On-going monitoring and maintenance will be carried out to determine when replacement is required.

Hunstanton South to Wolferton Creek



The Strategy confirms that it is sustainable to hold the line for the short and medium term. It assumes that the existing balance of hard and soft defences will remain and that maintenance of the existing groynes will continue.

The defences need continuous maintenance. The Environment Agency's operational staff undertake an annual beach recycling activity in February/March after the winter and Spring tides have eroded the shingle defences. If this maintenance were to stop, it could result in an immediate increase in flood risk.



This beach recycling work was funded by government grant until 2013, as part of a previous scheme approval in 2006. The introduction of the government's

partnership funding approach has meant that the work can no longer be fully funded by government and so between 2013 and 2015 the work has been paid for by Local Levy funding provided by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC). The RFCC has approved the use of Local Levy funding to extend the beach recycling operation to February 2016 with funding also coming from the Borough Council and Norfolk County Council. This is to allow time for the required partnership funding arrangements to be set up.

The Strategy has developed a number of adaptable options (see below) with varying Standards of Protection requiring varying levels of funding contributions. The standard of protection that the defence provides depends on the level of contributions that the local community and businesses can afford.

Option: Do Nothing

Cease all current maintenance activity, no investment.

Shingle bank erodes rapidly and stops providing protection in 3 to 5 years or sooner if damaged by severe storms; hard defences weaken over 15 to 20 years; low lying areas frequently flooded, caravan parks and agricultural use no longer sustainable.

Option: Do Minimum

Continue current annual recycling work at the same investment level.

Shingle bank gradually erodes and standard of protection continually reduces until no protection is afforded in around 30 years; chance of flooding gradually increases over this time.

Option: Sustain Defence Standard

Continue current annual recycling work; gradual increase of amount of ten yearly recharge and refurbishment of hard defences.

Standard of protection remains at current level, despite climate change (i.e. a chance of between 1:10 and 1:50 of flooding in any one year).

Option: Equal Improvements 1

Improve to 1:20 chance of flooding in any one year around Snettisham and to 1:50 chance of flooding in any one year around Hunstanton / Heacham. Similar investment in both areas.

Initial limited investment to improve standard, followed by recycling, recharge and refurbishment as needed to keep standard of protection at improved level despite climate change. Some reduction of chance of flooding, similar for both areas.

Option: Equal Improvements 2

Improve to 1:50 chance of flooding in any one year around Snettisham and to 1:75 chance of flooding in any one year around Hunstanton / Heacham. Similar investment in both areas.

Initial significant investment to improve standard, followed by recycling, recharge and refurbishment as needed to keep standard of protection at improved level despite climate change. Significant reduction of chance of flooding, similar for both areas.

Option: Equal Standards 1

Improve to 1:50 chance of flooding in any one year throughout the frontage. Higher investment around Snettisham than around Hunstanton / Heacham.

Initial limited investment to improve standard, followed by recycling, recharge and refurbishment as needed to keep standard of protection at improved level despite climate change. Some reduction of chance of flooding, more for Snettisham than for Hunstanton / Heacham.

Option: Equal Standards 2

Improve to 1:75 chance of flooding in any one year throughout the frontage. Higher investment around Snettisham than around Hunstanton / Heacham.

Initial significant investment to improve standard, followed by recycling, recharge and refurbishment as needed to keep standard of protection at improved level despite climate change. Significant reduction of chance of flooding, more for Snettisham than for Hunstanton / Heacham.

All options will need to be further assessed for their impact on the environment based upon their location within areas of designated conservation interest as part of a full project appraisal, prior to approval to proceed.

Funding future works

Under the government's Partnership Funding policy, a contribution from national government funding for Unit C options will only be available if partnership funding contributions can be secured. Using this Partnership Funding approach, the options recommended by this Strategy for Unit C could attract a contribution of approximately 25% of the cost of the option from national government funding. The remaining 75% will have to be funded from partnership contributions.

The WECMS project considered a wide range of funding mechanisms to try and find a fair and equitable system to acquire and spend money on flood defences in this area, finally recommending that a Community Interest Company (CIC) would be an effective means to manage local funding contributions.

Local caravan park owners and landowners, who directly benefit from flood defences in this area, have already expressed willingness to make voluntary contributions to at least sustaining, and perhaps improving, the defences between Hunstanton South and Wolferton Creek.

Mike McDonnell, of McDonnell Caravan Parks, has progressed the necessary paperwork to set up the CIC on behalf of caravan park owners and landowners and the East Wash Coastal Management CIC has now been officially incorporated.

Next steps

A project has already started to progress the necessary paperwork to take forward the Sustain Defence Standard (SDS) option for Unit C, as described above. It is important that the annual recycling operations are continued after the 2016 campaign when the current funding approval runs out. The SDS option is the most likely option to be affordable in the short term and will continue to provide a reasonable standard of protection.

Over time when the CIC has become established, and can gauge its fund raising capabilities, it may be possible to take forward one of the improvement options identified in the Strategy.

Units A & B are managed by the Borough Council and will continue to be monitored.

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