

Works on or near a Sea Defence

July 2017

We have received a number of complaints and enquiries from local residents at Heacham South Beach regarding the removal of material from the shingle ridge at several locations by property owners. The shingle ridge acts as a Sea Defence.

The beach and shingle ridge between South Hunstanton and Wolferton Creek helps protect people and 2,935 properties from tidal flooding. Each year annual beach recycling is needed to replenish material after the winter and spring tides have eroded the defences. If this activity ceases, it could result in an immediate increase in flood risk. Consequently a partnership project between the Environment Agency, Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, Anglian Water and the East Wash Coastal Management Community Interest Company (CIC) has been set up to gain the necessary funding to continue maintaining the defence in the short term.

Following a detailed survey of the defence in this area, it has been confirmed that while the shingle ridge is lower in some areas following the removal of material historically, it is still above the designed height.

In areas that have not been altered, the natural accretion of marram grass and wind-blown sand is reinforcing the protection of the sea defence and increasing in height, reducing the flood risk and also costs of artificially replacing material.

The management and repair of this sea defence is now approximately 60% locally funded and non-permitted work may increase costs to property owners significantly while also reducing the level of protection from flooding.

We continue to note and receive reports of unauthorized works within this sensitive area. Not only will such works increase the risk of flooding to those responsible and other properties in the area, but due to recent legislation changes, could involve committing criminal offences and leave those responsible liable to prosecution or other enforcement action. Many activities can be undertaken safely and legally but will still require the prior authorization of the Environment Agency.

You must follow the environmental permitting rules if you want to do work on or near a sea defence.

These are regulated under environmental permits (formerly flood defence consent). You are breaking the law if you operate without getting the permit you need. More information on environmental permits can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-need-an-environmental-permit>

There are other laws that may also restrict what you can do on or near a sea defence. Contact the Environment Agency to find out about byelaws that may apply to you.

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Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

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03708 506 506

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