

Kelling to Lowestoft Ness Shoreline Management Plan

Extended Steering Group: Policy Development Workshop

5 November 2003, NNDC Offices, Cromer

Summary Note



Halcrow Group Limited

Halcrow

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1 Introduction

This document summarises the key comments and conclusions from the Kelling to Lowestoft Ness Shoreline Management Plan Extended Steering Group (ESG) workshop held on 5th November 2003 at NNDC Offices, Cromer.

The aim of the ESG workshop was to involve the stakeholders of the Kelling to Lowestoft Ness Shoreline Management Plan in the setting of future shoreline management policies through bringing together an understanding of the issues, the risks, and an appreciation of each other's viewpoints.

2 Meeting Attendees

Name	Affiliation	Breakout Session 1	Breakout Session 2
Mr Kevin Burgess	Halcrow	A	2
Dr Helen Jay	Halcrow	B	3
Mr Keith Tyrell	Terry Oakes Associates	C	4
Mr Peter Frew	North Norfolk District Council	A	1
Mr Gary Watson	North Norfolk District Council	A	2
Mr Brian Farrow	North Norfolk District Council	A	1
Mr Gary Alexander	North Norfolk District Council	D	1
Mr David Wilson	Defra	A	2
Mr Peter Lambley	English Nature	B	2
Mr Bernard Harris	Gt. Yarmouth Borough Council	A	3
Mr Paul Houghton	Gt. Yarmouth Borough Council	A	4
Mr Julian Walker	Waveney District Council	A	4
Mr Guy Cooper	Environment Agency	A	2
Mr Steve Hayman	Environment Agency	A	-
Ms Heidi Mahon	Norfolk County Council	B	3
Mr John Hiskett	Norfolk Wildlife Trust	B	1
Mr Tim Venes	Norfolk Coast Project	B	-
Mr John Sizer	National Trust	D	-
Mr Peter Murphy	English Heritage	D	1
Cllr Tony Overill	Caister-on-Sea Parish Council	C	3
Cllr Terry W Morris	Corton Parish Council	C	4
Cllr. Steve Chilvers	Councillor for the Gunton and Corton Ward	C	4
Cllr. D Corbett	District Councillor – Bacton Division	C	2
Cllr. B J Hannah	County Councillor – Sheringham Division	C	-
Prof. Tim O'Riordan	School of Environmental Sciences, UEA	D	-
Mr Robin Buxton	Norfolk & Suffolk Flood Defence Committee Member (also representing CLA)	D	2
Mr John Ash	Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd	D	1
Ms Susana Dias	Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd	B	3
Session 1: A = Technical (Local authorities, EA and Defra) B = Biodiversity and Nature Conservation C = Councillors D = Planners (National Trust, English Heritage and others)		Session 2: 1 = Kelling to Bacton 2 = Bacton to Winterton 3 = Winterton to Great Yarmouth 4 = Gorleston to Lowestoft Ness	

3 Outline of day's activities

Presentation by Halcrow

This outlined the role of the SMP and summarized activities to date. There was also an overview of the extent of potential risk and illustration of how the coast would look under the two baseline cases: 'no active intervention', i.e. letting defences fail, and 'maintain present management', i.e. retaining all existing defences.

Breakout Session 1

The ESG was divided into four groups of individuals with broadly similar interests or disciplines (see Table above). Each group were asked to provide a practical vision for the SMP coastline over each of the three epochs, taking account of the information on defined issues and risks. The conclusions from each group were fed back to the rest of the ESG and there was a brief discussion of the main points.

Breakout Session 2

The ESG was then divided into different groups of individuals, split by geographical area. Each group were asked to consider the different viewpoints highlighted from the morning session and seek a level of agreement on what should be the key drivers/policy options that need to underpin scenario testing for specific sections of coast. The conclusions of each group were fed back to the rest of the ESG, highlighting areas of agreement and conflict.

4 Summary of conclusions from the Breakout Sessions

4.1 Breakout Session 1

4.1.1 Group A: Technical

- Money is a key control on anything we do on the coast – if we had enough money anything would be possible.
- Over the next 20 years there should be no reduction in the present level of protection to communities but increased planning controls. However, the knock-on effect of this needs to be considered.
- The vision over the 20+ years is one of working towards a self-sustaining coast, but with minimal interference from man. However, this will involve relocation and therefore requires national debate and guidance.
- It is important that communities are recognised but we don't want our successors to be asking the same questions in 20 years time.
- We need to work out how we move from today to the long term. If we allow communities to retreat this involves planning issues and compensation issues.
- Within the longer term vision there will still be places that will require protection, but the debate will need to focus on where will be saved.
- Importance of communities does not change over time.

4.1.2 Group B: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

Excluding Happisburgh to Winterton:

- The long term vision is for a naturally functioning coastline
- There should therefore be a move towards managed realignment with the thought of removing defences along cliffed section over the next 20 to 30 years.
- In general, managed realignment will satisfy objectives for the SSSI sites, but there will be loss of CWS cliff top grasslands. This will be an acceptable loss as long as a 'sustainable' coastline is the overall aim.
- There will also be loss of features and communities that are covered by the AONB – there is however, the possibility of relocation, which, to be consistent with the AONB, would need to be carried out in a planned manner. Moving towards a natural coastline will improve landscape quality in terms of the coastline.

Happisburgh to Winterton:

- There are significant habitats in this area, which are protected by the Habitat Regulations.
- It should, however, be possible to 'creatively' apply the Habitat Regulations with the overall aim to allow habitats to evolve.
- An area of potential erosion/ loss would be Winterton Dunes – but this may be acceptable if we are moving towards increased biodiversity. It is accepted that these dunes probably couldn't be recreated – particularly due to their important acidic characteristic.
- The main vision from this group would be for this area to flood, however other Nature Conservation, such as RSPB and the Broads Authority may disagree, due to the loss of important freshwater habitats. It is therefore recommended that these groups get involved in the SMP process.
- It would be hoped to have a natural grading from saline to freshwater, i.e. moving towards a 'no active intervention' policy.
- There are also major socio-economic issues therefore the appropriate timescales for introducing such changes need to be carefully considered.
- There is also high uncertainty over how the coast will look and evolve and further studies need to be carried out to improve our knowledge and understanding. Therefore would accept holding the line in the short term, i.e. over the next 20 years, so that further research could be carried out.

4.1.3 Group C: Councillors

- Important to continue protection of major settlements such as Cromer and Sheringham throughout the life of the plan.
- Accepted the inevitability of losing smaller settlements – main thinking was that the costs of defending these would be an unacceptable burden on the rest of the community as well as the sustainability arguments put forward in the introductory presentations.
- Important to start to build into the planning process the means by which people and assets from these vulnerable settlements should be relocated.
- Further development should, in general, be prohibited within the zone shown to be at risk under the "Do Nothing" scenario. Quite accepted their role as planning authorities to be indicating this within local plans. Were prepared to modify this view where defences were likely to be provided to an adequate standard over a prolonged period.

The potential erosion line needs to be incorporated into development plans to limited future development and there must be more consideration of the definition of village envelopes with the possibility of 'rolling back' the village into adjacent landward areas. Potential relocation areas should be identified within the Local Plans.

- Seemed to accept as inevitable that the Happisburgh to Winterton frontage would breach in the future. Their major concerns were the protection of the individual communities within Broadland and maintaining the "backdoor" defences to Great Yarmouth.
- Fully endorsed the policy of preventing development in the indicative flood plains.
- The major installation of Bacton Gas Terminal would need protection over the short to medium term but we should expect its importance to dwindle, certainly beyond the 50 year timescale, after which allowing natural processes to take effect will be the preferred policy. However, this may remain an important *receptor* site for gas supply (e.g. from Russia).
- The members were keen for the predictive process to recognise that, over the 100-year period under consideration, changes would take place in the natural environment and the habitats and species that it supports.
- There was a general feeling that we should not put too great a store on the attractiveness of beaches to tourists. The style of holidaymaking had changed so that there was more demand for undercover activities. The traditional "bucket and spade" holiday relied on the too-few hot and sunny days and had been superseded by the holiday centre style of attraction which could be located well away from the vulnerable zone. Likely that the loss of the beach would be of more concern to residents, dog walkers etc.
- It was important that those holiday developments that would come under threat as the result of the final policies should be encouraged to relocate within the locality. Taking a global view that people unable to enjoy facilities at a particular place, because they had been lost to flooding or erosion, could simply go to another resort 50 miles away was unacceptable. Such attractions should be kept in the locality to have the minimum adverse effect on the local tourism economy.
- So many of the issues being encountered when deciding the fate of each length of coastline would be made simpler to deal with if compensation was available to those facing financial loss.
- There is a need to take account of the Outer Harbour development at Great Yarmouth.

4.1.4 Group D: Planners

- There needs to be improved understanding of coastline with more modelling undertaken over the next 20 years.
- The vision for the next 20 years should be a 'hold the line' or 'carry on as present', with better information continually fed into the process. There should, however, be restricted development.
- Extreme events (significant damage) could change policy and perception.
- Managing conflict may change, depending on new policies.
- In the Medium term (up to 50 years) there should be a management of erosion/ loss with introduction of better information.

- Need to record archaeological sites/buildings in advance of inevitable loss. Possibility for relocation of properties.
- There needs to be an improved mechanism for land loss/ compensation/ planning; with consideration of how to deal with property 'blight'.
- Need to look wider than the SMP area and consider cost/ benefits of the policy on other areas and there needs to be a more integrated approach (possibly move towards ICZM).
- There is a presumption for a 'natural' coast by Year 100. By this stage there may also be a different approach to erosion and flooding and perceptions of these events may change over time.
- Long term planning is required, which addresses issues such as prioritising assets, landscape and built environment to be able to manage loss effectively. By Year 100 there should be acceptance of natural or 'semi-natural' defences. There should be consideration of appropriate design rather than compensation, i.e. consideration of 'Redesigned' landscapes.
- Need to think about strategic safeguards for high 'value' assets – 3 safeguards:
 - Property and nature conservation interests.
 - Reconstructed landscapes.
 - Redesigned landscapes.

4.1.5 General Discussion

- Education must start tomorrow.
- Should we be allowing settlements to 'roll back' into adjacent areas?
- We are in danger of confusing two issues: (1) the physical structure of a settlement and (2) the community/ people.
- At Happisburgh people want to keep their housing rather than just accept compensation.
- We should be aware that a natural breach along the Happisburgh to Winterton frontage would totally influence political decision and defence along the present line could be an inevitable response; therefore we need to be making plans before that happens.
- There needs to be 'buy in' to the SMP process by local people.

4.2 Breakout Session 2

4.2.1 Kelling to Bacton

- This is a cliffed section, with communities interspersed with agricultural land. There are relative levels of importance in terms of the settlements.
- Cromer is very important and can be considered a key 'Driver' and therefore the vision would be for this to be protected up to Year 100.
- Sheringham is also a key 'Driver' and therefore the vision would be for this to be protected up to Year 100.
- It would be acceptable for there to be no beaches at these two locations.
- There was indecision over Mundesley, but the general view was that it would probably become unsustainable to hold by year 100.

- For the smaller communities, the vision would be to hold in the short term and then move towards a managed retreat.
- Other sections have natural environmental designations.
- Bacton Gas Terminal will be a key driver while it still exists. The cost of relaying Bacton pipeline would be huge as there are both surface and sub-surface installations.
- There will be issues of outflanking.
- Key to the success is acceptance by the communities and ideas will have to be very carefully presented.
- This vision does mean that we could possibly have a coast that is not sustainable in process terms.
- There is some disagreement with the ranking in that access to the beach needs to link to the value of the beach (although it is accepted that in many cases access could be relocated).

4.2.2 Bacton to Winterton

- Bacton Gas Terminal is a key driver and is likely to remain as a receptor site for at least the next 50 years and maybe longer. But in theory it is an asset that could be moved landwards.
- Between Bacton and Happisburgh Village there are no strong drivers for protecting in the long term.
- Between Happisburgh and Winterton there is a general consensus that it will be improbable to hold the coast in its current position, with managed retreat inevitable and acceptable in the long term. There are various options available regarding the extent of the retired line and timing. The decision depends upon economics and impacts on land/ property behind.
- Biodiversity will also be a key driver in this area.
- It would be possible to protect isolated areas from flooding using bunds, but these would have to be extremely high. Hickling Wall, for example, forms a secondary defences which could be developed as a retired line.
- There needs to be more detailed study into this area, as we would be creating a new landscape.
- The key driver at Winterton Dunes is to maintain the natural functioning of the system and allow a dynamic dune system. The wall at the back of the dunes may therefore need to be realigned to allow this.

4.2.3 Winterton to Great Yarmouth

- Along much of this shoreline problems of erosion are not as severe as those in other areas and the North Denes area is currently accreting. The key driver is therefore to aim for a naturally-functioning coastline.
- In first 20 years there could be a policy of No Active Intervention along Newport, Scratby and California, with acceptance of loss of holiday accommodation.
- At the southern end of Caister there is a flood risk issues, but this could be solved by a flood defence measure.
- Need to consider impacts of the Outer Harbour proposed at Great Yarmouth. This has received EU funds.

- Great Yarmouth will be a key driver at the southern end due to commercial and residential properties. Due to the flood plain area behind there would be nowhere to relocate housing locally. There is also an issue of potential backdoor flooding, which links back to the Happisburgh-Winterton frontage.
- There is an SPA at North Denes – if there is a decision to ‘do nothing’ then the habitat would need to be replaced, but the Terns are a mobile species and therefore it should be possible to relocate the SPA within the SMP area.

4.2.4 Gorleston to Lowestoft Ness

Gorleston

- It was important to maintain defences to Gorleston on the line of the present sea wall. The potential loss of the beach was of less significance than the loss of the promenade and built sea front attractions.
- The matter of the East Port development was discussed and it was pointed out that the proposed mitigation measures included sand bypassing to ensure that down drift beaches would not be adversely affected. This may give the opportunity to artificially nourish the Gorleston Beach.
- Allowing erosion to take place would see the loss of a substantial number of high quality residences being lost after 50 years. This would be unacceptable.
- It was also possible that “Do nothing” would result in loss of the South Pier protecting the entrance to the River Yare beyond the 50 year timescale. This could lead to interference with the discharge characteristics of the river outfall and a knock on impact to the town’s defences and the environment and ecology of Broadland. Again, this risk seemed to be unacceptable.

Gorleston and Hopton

- This frontage is protected by a timber revetment, which restricts the rate of erosion of the cliffs. The protected land is used as a golf course. There seemed to be some potential for relocating that part of the course, which would be lost to erosion on adjoining land currently, designated as agricultural.
- The suggested way forward was to continue maintaining the revetment throughout its residual life of 20 years but to abandon it thereafter. The golf club should be encouraged to plan for future loss of the seaward area by acquiring this adjoining land so that it is ready for occupation and use when the defences fail.

Hopton

- Although the 50 and 100-year erosion lines indicate that development will be lost at Hopton this is, in the main, holiday accommodation. As before, there seemed opportunity for the development to spread into adjoining land. We discussed the issue that holiday developments need to invest considerable sums periodically, whatever the circumstances, to keep their accommodation and attractions up to date and meeting visitors expectations.
- The village envelope would need to be amended to accommodate these changes but the members of the group felt that this was practical.

- The few remaining residential buildings in the vulnerable zone did not seem to merit the substantial expense of protecting the Hopton frontage. It was noted that none of the village amenities or community facilities was located in the zone at risk.

Hopton to Corton

- This frontage is also protected by a timber revetment with the same residual life – 20 years. This should be maintained in the interests of safety until the end of its effective life.
- The principal land use is devoted to the Broadland Sands holiday development that, again, has the potential to expand to the north and south. The planning process should encourage the owners to prepare for the loss of the revetment's protection by doing this. As the development is based on the use of static caravans this should not present insurmountable problems beyond the cost of any necessary land acquisition. It was noted that the owner had aspirations to develop the beach facilities for his visitors. This may be usable in a trade off – by indicating that the beach would remain healthier, for longer, if cliff erosion were allowed to take place.

Corton

- It is impossible to ignore the work, which is currently taking place to provide new defences to the village. Although the work has been economically justified on a timescale of 20 years it is expected that it will provide substantial protection for longer. Without the defences, erosion would result in the loss of the cliff top holiday development consisting of brick built accommodation blocks and a small number of residential properties.
- Unlike the previous examples there did not seem to be the same potential for expansion of the site into non-vulnerable areas. This development is seen as a major contributor to the tourism economy of Waveney District.
- The 50-year erosion line also threatens the main street within the village and, with it, shops, pubs and a chapel, as well as permanent residences – essentially the heart of the village. Additionally the main access roads into the village are also shown as being under threat.
- It was considered by the group essential to secure the protection of village by maintaining the new defences beyond the 20 year assumed life of the current works.
- It was proposed to defer the policy decision affecting the next 50 years until the end of the defence life was approached. The prevailing conditions and practicalities of replacing the defences would then be re-assessed. However it should be realised that to retain Corton as a viable community without the benefit of the coastal defences would require the construction of a new village community hub, residential development and two new access roads, sited away from vulnerable cliff top locations
- Would therefore need to consider the cost implication of relocating community facilities and infrastructure landwards. Corton Coast Road (and to south) would need to be maintained as part of policy for Corton.

Gunton

- This frontage is provided with groynes, which are semi-derelict and deemed to be ineffective. There would appear to be no justification for their replacement or the provision of any other style of defence.

- The one rider to this decision would be the short length of coast road at the northern end of this frontage. This may be at risk within 20 years as shown on the available maps but it is assumed that this will be dealt with as part of the policy implementation for the previous section.
- We consulted with the “Environmental” group about the status of the CWS at Gunton Warren but there seemed to be an acceptance that this might be lost and that it did not warrant specific protection.

North Denes to Ness Point

- Between Gunton and Ness Point, Lowestoft is the key driver due to major infrastructure and commercial properties. The defences to this frontage protect an important industrial area, a tourism asset and vital infrastructure on which the whole town depends.
- It was therefore deemed essential by the group to maintain the defences to the area throughout the life of the plan.

4.2.5 General

- Need to think about what happens if communities want to self-fund a defence measure in the future that may be at odds with processes.
- There is a need to be consistent along the coast in terms of policy evaluation, e.g. differences stated above for Mundesley and Corton.
- Need to ensure that development control aspects feed into the planning process.
- There is a willingness to accept change, e.g. loss of villages and town properties, but this requires compensatory measures at both local planning and national government policy levels.