

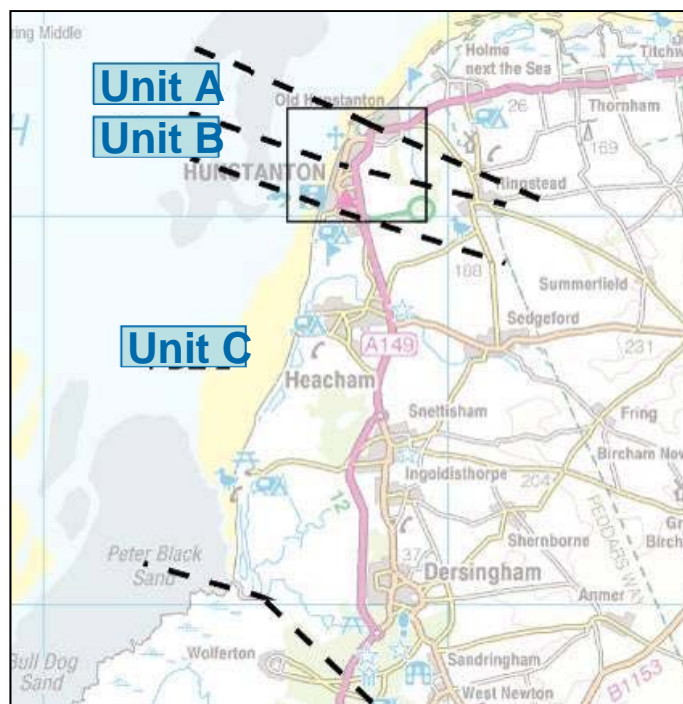
Briefing Note

The Wash East Coastal Management Strategy

March 2014

This briefing paper is to provide some background and an update on the current position with regards to issues and progress of the developing Wash East Coastal Management Strategy (WECMS).

The Wash Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2), completed in 2010 identified a number of issues in relation to the management of the coastal frontage from Hunstanton Cliffs to Wolferton Creek (Snettisham beach). This section of coastline has been split into three Units shown in the plan below:



Plan of The Wash East Coastal Management Strategy study area

Unit A - Hunstanton Cliffs

These cliffs are not currently protected by any coastal defences and are therefore eroding. There is uncertainty over the rate at which erosion is occurring and when this is likely to reach a point where intervention may be considered. The eroded material from the cliffs provides sediment (beach material) to the beaches to the south, in Units B and C. However, there is uncertainty over how critically important the cliff material is in feeding the beaches to the south, and therefore what impact there could be on beach levels from Hunstanton to Snettisham if this sediment feed was to be stopped.

Unit B - Hunstanton Town

The coastal defences in this area consist of a sea wall and promenade which is fronted by a beach held by wooden groynes. These defences provide protection against erosion for the majority of this Unit. The SMP2 recognised the benefits of holding the existing line of the coast in this Unit as there is significant tourism, properties, infrastructure and commerce which are all protected by the coastal defences. However the level of works required to sustainably hold the line, taking into account future climate change predictions, is currently uncertain.

Unit C - Hunstanton south to Wolferton Creek

This is a low lying area primarily at risk of flooding. There is currently a need for annual beach recycling in order to maintain the front line shingle ridge defence. If this maintenance practice were to stop this could

result in an immediate increase to risk to life in this area. However, it is also currently uncertain whether this maintenance practice is sustainable and technically and environmentally feasible in the long term in the face of climate change and environmental impacts.

The SMP2 identified strong coastal processes links between the Units, so any study investigating coastal management at this frontage will need to consider this whole coastline in an integrated way. This will be achieved through the Wash East Coastal Management Strategy (WECMS) which will investigate the issues above to determine a plan for coastal management. The objectives of the WECMS have been developed with input from the local community, businesses and councils, and are:

- (a) to determine a sustainable approach to flood and erosion risk management for the people, property and environment between Hunstanton Cliffs and Wolferton Creek;
- (b) to identify and promote a coastal management approach that balances technical, environmental, economic and social issues for The Wash East coast;
- (c) to improve our knowledge of relevant coastal processes, where necessary, to inform key project decisions and the study completion;
- (d) to improve public understanding of coastal management issues for The Wash East coast, to gain public support for any changes in approach to coastal management and to pursue possible third party funding mechanisms; and
- (e) to identify appropriate responsibility for future coastal management.

The option assessment has been completed for Units A & B with draft reports circulated for review. The preferred approaches have generally been accepted as the most suitable and appropriate way forward for these units. In particular for Unit A where a pilot approach to trial various erosion protection methods is suggested. This is a critical part of the development of the WECMS.

The Unit C (south of Hunstanton) option appraisal and selection of a preferred option is dependent on the availability of funding under the Government's Partnership Funding Initiative (PFI). A considerable amount of research has been completed to find the best mechanism for future funding. We have been unable to find a legal and practical mechanism for the collection and management of partnership contributions from a diverse range of contributors on an on-going basis that would be fully equitable in that all those who benefit would pay. As a result, it has become clear that funding from local contributors (both public and private) is only likely to be secured via voluntary, contractually confirmed arrangements through the formation of a Charitable Trust or a Community Interest Company (CIC)

A recent meeting between the Environment Agency (EA) Central Area Manager, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk (BCKLWN) and Norfolk County Council (NCC) was reported as a positive initial step in terms of taking forward the strategy and in beginning to agree how a preferred option could be funded. A number of points were agreed:

- (1) The WECMS will progress to programme and present a range of options for the ongoing management of the coast between Hunstanton and Snettisham. The final choice of option will be dependent on the views of local stakeholders and the level of partnership funding contributions which can be raised.
- (2) The WECMS will go out to public consultation in summer 2014.
- (3) The current approved funding from the Central Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (CRFCC) will cease after the Feb/March 2015 beach recycling campaign. In order to allow more time to set up the necessary partnership funding consortium the authorities (EA, BCKLWN and NCC) agreed to seek the necessary funding for a further recycling campaign in Feb/March 2016 on a tripartite basis.
- (4) The authorities (EA, BCKLWN and NCC) agreed to participate in discussions with local stakeholders to set up a Charitable Trust or CIC.
- (5) The BCKLWN agreed to lead on discussions with stakeholders to set up a Charitable Trust or CIC with support from the EA and NCC.

The Strategy Appraisal Report (StAR) will be required to demonstrate that the option(s) are fundable. This will not require the LAs or businesses to explicitly state the level of funding available, however, written support is needed from the LAs for the Strategy and anything that can be supplied by businesses such as

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

the caravan parks and landowners will help. Where possible it would be beneficial for the LA's to state what financial commitment can be made. The StAR needs to show that there have been discussions on the contributions required. Governance arrangements need to be addressed.

The strategy will identify an economically preferred option for Unit C. This however may not be the local stakeholders preferred option, rather the choice will be dependent on the contributions available. If the level of contributions required cannot be met for this economically preferred option the various parties will need to understand that lower cost options, which could provide a lower standard of protection, will be delivered. However in order to demonstrate that the strategy is credible and affordable we have to show the approach to future funding - develop a plan.

To demonstrate that there is a mechanism that makes it affordable the strategy has to have a minimum "sustain" option that the community and others support. A future funding plan of others ie the lead authority (which in this case would be the LA) has to be shown as credible at a strategic level.

If any gap in funding is too big then it is likely that schemes are not affordable which could result in loss of credibility and the strategy not gaining approval. This would mean no works being funded from Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) thus making the funding gap wider still..

Detailed discussions with the larger interest groups, such as caravan parks and major landowners are needed. It is expected that meetings will be held over the next couple of months with these groups to gauge their response to the likely levels of contributions that could be needed. This would be followed by a joint Advisory/Key Stakeholder Group meeting to update members on progress and review the strategy options before going out to full public consultation in the summer.

The funding plan contained within the StAR should describe the acceptance of the vision and seek to explain where funding may be available and how it may be realised.

Discussions on the most appropriate mechanism, such as Charitable Trust or CIC, are needed to inform how the money could be collected and used to fund the options. This next step is key in identifying how the options could be funded. We are interested to learn about CIC's and how & whether one might work in this instance. This will enable us to have a more informed discussion with our stakeholders over the coming months.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk