



Inappropriate coastal management

Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites Theme Workshop Note

Introduction

Inappropriate coastal management was identified as a priority during a scoping exercise carried out by the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS) project.

Further information on the criteria used to identify priorities can be found in [Natural England Research Report 053 IPENS Programme Scoping: identifying key issues affecting Natura 2000 sites and priorities for the IPENS project](#).

A technical workshop was held on 27 August 2013, attended by six experts from Natural England and three representatives from other relevant organisations.

The aim of the workshop was to look for a strategic approach and explore new mechanisms, where these exist, for tackling inappropriate coastal management and coastal squeeze at a national level (linking into the Healthy Estuaries Project). The information and ideas gathered at the workshop will be used to shape the content of the IPENS Theme Plan.

The Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS) has hosted a series of workshops with key stakeholders in order to gather views and ideas on how to resolve some of the issues affecting Natura 2000 sites. The views in this note are those of the workshop participants and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England or the Environment Agency.



Key messages from the workshop

- The two related terms (i.e. inappropriate coastal management and coastal squeeze) need to be defined, clearly distinguished and understood in order that they can be appropriately addressed in planning and management.
 - Coastal squeeze has implications for flood risk management as it affects ecosystem services provided by intertidal habitat (e.g. it will cost more to maintain sea walls if the intertidal area is lost).
 - All stakeholders (e.g. Local Authorities, Non-Government Organisations, Internal Drainage Boards, and the general public) should be part of the dialogue, recognising that the Environment Agency plays the key role in delivery.
 - Conservation managers need to address changes in freshwater habitats if the use of managed realignment to create intertidal habitat is to be sustainable. Environment Agency Regional Habitat Creation Plans can play a key role in creating both freshwater and intertidal habitats where this is related to flood risk management.
 - There is a need for Natural England and the Environment Agency, through their input to local plans and strategic development plans, to influence the identification of potential locations for habitat creation; local authorities should be involved and this issue should be linked to the delivery of flood risk management and Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMA).
 - The creation of intertidal habitat takes time and we need reliable, trusted evidence to demonstrate that there are/will be losses of this habit and thus a need for creation of new habitat, and also to demonstrate the suitability of available techniques.
 - Communication with Members of Parliament and local politicians is essential so that they have a clear understanding of the issue when they engage with constituents, particularly those asking them to support current flood defences. The Environment Agency needs to be involved in this communication.
 - Unplanned changes to the coast as a result of storm events can change the situation rapidly, and there is a need to develop a response approach for Natura 2000 sites.
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Envisaged next steps

- The content of the Inappropriate Coastal Management Theme Plan will be developed in conjunction with workshop attendees and invitees during 2014.
- The first steps will be to work with coastal specialists to (a) identify what should be included in the Theme Plan, based on available information and (b) Review information on blockages to mechanism implementation, potential solutions, and suggested new mechanisms.
- The plan should take into consideration the need to raise the value of managed realignment in the public / political sectors and to be clearer about the benefits of this, and why it is necessary to allow sites to return to a more natural dynamic state.

Workshop participants

The following organisations and Natural England staff participated in the workshop:

Senior Adviser, IPENS	Natural England
Lead Adviser, Land Management	Natural England
Lead Adviser	Natural England
Principal Adviser, Land Use	Natural England
Senior Specialist, Landscape & Biodiversity	Natural England
Principle Adviser, Major Developments	Natural England
Stour and Orwell EMS Officer	Suffolk Coast and Heaths Environment Agency RSPB

Image: Blakeney, North Norfolk Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
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This work is supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community.

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