

English Nature Research Report 640

Coastal biodiversity opportunities in the South West Region

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Introduction

Royal Haskoning were commissioned by English Nature in September 2004 to identify coastal biodiversity opportunities within the South West region (defined as between Durlston Head, Dorset and Minehead, Somerset). Opportunities for environmental enhancement were investigated through two facilitated workshops involving a wide range of organisations actively engaged in coastal conservation activities. The output from the workshops, in terms of the potential environmental enhancement opportunities identified, will enable English Nature and other coastal groups to make a positive contribution to the second generation of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs). An awareness of conservation opportunities that might be associated with potential coastal management measures will also enable English Nature to identify opportunities for the delivery of the coastal Habitat Action Plan targets published by the UK Biodiversity Group.

What was done

Opportunities for environmental enhancement were investigated through two facilitated workshops involving a wide range of organisations actively engaged in coastal conservation activities. The output from the workshops, in terms of the potential environmental enhancement opportunities identified, will enable English Nature and other coastal groups to make a positive contribution to the second generation of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs). An awareness of conservation opportunities that might be associated with potential coastal management measures will also enable English Nature to identify opportunities for the delivery of the coastal Habitat Action Plan targets published by the UK Biodiversity Group (UK Biodiversity Group, 1999).

It is acknowledged that there are various social, economic and sustainability factors that need consideration in the selection of the preferred coastal defence policy. It is important to stress that it is the purpose of this research study to identify alternative coastal defence policies to those currently recommended by SMPs. This is to promote environmental enhancement

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opportunities through the SMP process in accordance with Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) High Level Target for Flood and Coastal Defence, Target 4 - Biodiversity

Results and conclusions

This report provides a summary of the potential opportunities identified at the workshops and relates them to the coastal defence options available to the SMP process. However, biodiversity opportunities that are not exclusively related to coastal defence objectives are included, for example, restoration of coastal grazing land habitat. It should be noted therefore, that the means of realising such opportunities may not be possible within the next generation of SMPs, and that other mechanisms for realising such biodiversity gain may need to be enacted.

English Nature's viewpoint

This study provides an important starting point for English Nature as a key stakeholder in Shoreline Management Plan review in the south west region. The results of this study will enable active engagement by staff to promote biodiversity enhancement opportunities that could be realised through Shoreline Management Plan review. This study will also benefit our work on restoring favourable condition to SSSIs as it provides a long term vision about sustainable coastal management. Additionally, other opportunities within the coastal environment, but not directly linked to SMP policy are also identified which will help progress action towards implementing the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for habitats and species. The commissioning of this report further demonstrates our commitment to the objectives of the *Maritime Strategy: Our Coasts and Seas*.

Selected references

ENGLISH NATURE. 2005. *Our Coasts and Seas - making space for people, for industry and wildlife*. Peterborough: English Nature.

Further information

For the full report or other publications on this subject, please contact the Enquiry Service on 01733 455100/101/102 or email enquiries@english-nature.org.uk

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