

North Norfolk Coastal Change Pathfinder Programme

Evaluating Options for Business/Private Contributions to Sea Defences between Wolferton Creek and South Hunstanton



**Report on:
Stakeholder Workshop
Memorial Hall, Snettisham
3 December 2010**

for

Stakeholders and Workshop Attendees

RPA

December 2010

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by

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RPA REPORT – ASSURED QUALITY	
Project: Ref/Title	J726/WCtoSH Pathfinder
Approach:	In accordance with the Proposal
Report Status:	Workshop Report
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Report approved for issue by:	Meg Postle, Director, RPA
Date:	14 December 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Pathfinder Study

This study forms part of the Pathfinder being undertaken by BCKL&WN. It is looking to involve local business interests, stakeholders and the Environment Agency in evaluating options for establishing an equitable mechanism for securing contributions towards the long-term cost of coastal defences. The study is also investigating alternative actions such as roll-back and other adaptation measures.

1.2 Involvement of Stakeholders

The Pathfinder Project has so far involved three stakeholder events:

- an initial workshop in Hunstanton;
- a drop-in session in Heacham; and
- a second workshop in Snettisham.

This report provides details of the discussions and comments from the second stakeholder workshop, which was held in the Memorial Hall in Snettisham on 3rd December.

2. WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

The workshop was attended by several people from along the affected frontage including:

Bob Almey	Snettisham resident and emergency warden
Dave Bocking	Snettisham resident and emergency warden
Pippa Lawton	Environment Agency
Tony Parkin	Heacham Show Time Amusements
Nigel Woonton	Environment Agency
Brian Long	Councillor, BCKL&WN
John Smith	Hunstanton Town Council
Roger Drinkwater	Heacham Parish Council
Fred Parkes	Snettisham Parish Council
Peter Jermany	BCKL&WN
Trish Hammond	Heacham Parish Council

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Initial Comments

The workshop began with discussion of a range of issues including:

- the provision of insurance for those with properties in the flood risk area;

- the need to publicise the study and the results; and
- the current situation with regard to maintaining the sea defences.

A brief summary of the initial issues discussed is given below.

Fairness – it was commented that there is a need to ensure that both inland and coastal flooding are treated fairly.

Insurance – it was suggested that insurance premiums in the local area have already increased. If the sea defences were not maintained to a satisfactory standard, it is likely that insurance premiums will increase further. It may ultimately be cheaper to contribute towards sea defences to ensure that insurance premiums do not increase to the extent that they are unaffordable. (Note that the current Defra consultation may assist with the issue of insurance.)

Publicising the results – there is a problem with trying to get the public to engage. Previous events have also struggled to get people involved. There is a suggestion to hold an event potentially around photos of the 1953 floods to attract people's interest and to remind them of flood issues. This could include an awareness raising session/feedback. Similar exhibitions have been held in Snettisham in the past and have attracted lots of people – more than filling the hall. An ongoing series of events would be needed to ensure as many people as possible were involved. (Note that it was later suggested that the public engagement aspects of the Pathfinder Project did not finish with the end of the study, but instead carried on, feeding into the Environment Agency's work.)

Awareness – the issue is awareness. People forget too quickly. There are too many other priorities (especially with Christmas coming up and with the weather being bad).

Snettisham beach - Snettisham has an issue with the beach and people wanting to make the beach private. There are issues with contributions for the parish precept and any potential increase/new contribution is likely to raise a lot of issues/concerns from those in the area.

Defence maintenance – currently, there is funding for maintenance of defences until 2012. It is unclear what would happen were there to be a breach.

Future situation - the Environment Agency (EA) is looking at what the future coastal strategy should be. Is it sustainable to keep topping the defences up every year? The area might end up with a very high defence which would be unacceptable for various reasons (e.g. visual amenity, loss of beach, etc.).

Businesses – it was remarked that it is important to acknowledge that all the businesses in the at-risk area contribute to the local economy through bringing visitors and hence money into the local area.

Stakeholder events – an Easter event is probably needed for caravan people to attend. It is essential to contact caravan owners at their residential address.

Other schemes - the Bucklebury example is a good one – there should be links with that in this project. (Note that this is included in the report on mechanisms for securing contributions.)

3.2 Matrix Showing Potential Contributions

Discussion then moved onto the matrix of potential contributions. The matrix was provided by RPA and showed various ways of dividing up the annual cost of maintaining the defences, assuming that £800,000 were required each year. This amount of money would be sufficient to maintain the status quo (with no consideration given to large scale capital works and the need to improve defences in response to sea level rise). Comments on the matrix (provided as Annex 1) are given below.

Contributors – if people living in the Borough are asked to pay, how do we explain to those who are above the 5m contour (and therefore not at risk) that it would be beneficial for them to contribute? They need to be able to see the link between the flood zone and the rest of the settlement. It is easy to see the link between tourists in the PEN area and local businesses which may be in the PEN area or outside it. However, it is more difficult to see the link between the need to retain the PEN area and the residents who live outside it.

Borough wide contributions below 5m – the figures used to calculate the contributions here only include properties in the affected parishes (based on AddressPoint data). There would actually be a lot more properties below 5m in the whole Borough. (Note new figures are being calculated to address this comment.)

Borough wide contributions – there is a caveat here since if everyone in the Borough is having to pay for the defences, it is necessary to offer defences to everyone who might be affected. Therefore the costs will actually increase.

Contributions – would it be possible to base caravan site contributions on the number of caravans? But what about the facilities provided? Two sites may have the same number of caravans but have totally different facilities, e.g. one might have a large clubhouse. (Note the current contributions by businesses are based on business rates so they take account of the different sizes of businesses.)

Ringfencing of contributions – it is important that any money raised is ring-fenced. People have to be able to see that their contribution is being spent locally and on defences. There is also an issue of what they are paying for – their contribution needs to be linked to what they will get in return. For example, if they pay more they could get an improvement in the defences, rather than maintenance of what they already have. There is a need to work closely with the EA and the EA project will need to take the results of the Pathfinder forwards to provide the information on what the contributions could provide.

Understanding the reason for the contributions - it is important that people are clear about who is benefiting from defences and how (especially those that would not

be flooded). This is the only way that people will understand better how they benefit (and hence why they need to contribute). This might be easier for businesses than residents.

Businesses – what do the figures mean for different types of business? It would be good to have a summary table for this. (Note that this is given in the main report.)

Level of contributions – it was commented that no one at the workshop thought that the level of contribution was unreasonable (even with £73 per household per year when compared with £111.97 as Borough Council Tax). But how should these figures be explained to the general public? People may not actually appreciate the problem. There need to be answers ready for when people ask questions, e.g. will the beach eventually be lost if hard defences are provided and maintained in the long term?

Deadlines – the timescale of the study is too short to come up with an answer. The project has to be used to raise awareness first, then tell people what it might mean. The project has to be made personal to them, e.g. tell them what they would have to pay (and why). The point was raised that the process of stakeholder engagement should not be limited by the Pathfinder deadlines since information can continue to feed into the Environment Agency's strategy work.

Stakeholder events – a newsletter describing the Pathfinder Project and a short questionnaire (structured around the questions asked at the drop-in session) is being sent to all businesses in the PEN area, the key stakeholder group and (through BCKLWN) to the residential address of caravan owners. This will give them an opportunity to be involved in the study. RPA will prepare short summaries of the findings of the study for the Heacham Parish Newsletter and the Hunstanton Newsletter. Publication deadlines for Snettisham may make it difficult to produce anything that will allow residents to provide feedback within the timescale of the Pathfinder Project.

Other schemes - the Bucklebury example is a good one – there should be links with that in this project. (Note that this is included in the report on mechanisms for securing contributions.)

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Overview

The study involves a third stakeholder workshop event prior to the production of the final report. Further details on this workshop and the study deadlines are given in the following sections.

4.2 Stakeholder Workshop 3

A final stakeholder workshop will be held at 2.30pm on Thursday 16th December 2010 at the Borough Council Offices, Valentine Road, Hunstanton. This will cover the issue of contributions, as well as ideas on how to deal with coastal change should defences not be maintained in the long term. The workshop will build on information gathered at the drop-in session in Heacham, as well as comments and ideas from the previous two workshops. Consideration will also be given to who might be able to help fund defences and/or adaptation options (i.e. other ways of dealing with coastal change).

4.3 Reporting

A draft report on different mechanisms for securing contributions has been produced for the Borough Council. This is currently being revised in line with comments received from the Borough Council, the stakeholder workshops and drop-in session.

A further report will be produced for the second part of the study on ways of dealing with coastal change should defences not be maintained or funded in the future. This report will incorporate the ideas and suggestions received at the drop-in session, as well as any comments made at the upcoming workshop in Hunstanton.

4.4 Feedback and Thanks

Thank you to all the stakeholders who have attended events so far and provided ideas and suggestions. Comments and feedback on the Pathfinder Project can be made until the 14th January 2011; the Final Report is due to be submitted later on in January 2011.

The results of the study will be presented at the Key Stakeholder Group on 28th February 2011. However, it is anticipated that stakeholder involvement in coastal management will be continued through the Environment Agency's work on reviewing the strategy for the area.

ANNEX 1: MATRIX SHOWING POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Comparison of Estimated Annual Contributions by Beneficiary and Approach									
Approach	Residents (on Band D Council Tax)			Businesses (per £1,000 of business rates)			Landowners (per 100ha of farmed land)		
	By taxes paid to Borough Council	By national taxation (all tax)	By national taxation (property taxes)	By taxes paid to Borough Council	By national taxation (all tax)	By national taxation (property taxes)	By taxes paid to Borough Council	By national taxation (all tax)	By national taxation (property taxes)
Contributions from parishes	£6.00	£73	£49	£160	£17	£81	£380	£34	-
Contribution from everyone in the Borough (for those below 5m)	£1.90	£23	£16	£38	£40	£19	£39	£4	-
Contribution from everyone in the Borough (for those above 5m)	£0.99	£12	£8	£19	£20	£10	£19	£2	-
Contribution from everyone in the Borough (same amount paid by all)	£1.10	£13	£9	£22	£20	£11	£22	£2	-
<p>Notes: the second and third rows (relating to contributions from everyone in the Borough below 5m and above 5m) should be taken as one potential option, with different contributions depending on whether a property/area of land is above or below the 5m contour. For the borough wide contributions, it is also important to note that the costs only relate to the frontage between Wolferton and South Hunstanton. If the whole Borough were to contribute to the scheme, then is likely that the whole of the Borough's frontage would have to be offered sea defences. This would obviously increase the cost per unit when compared with the figures given above.</p>									