

# Shoreline Management Plans: the next steps

David Collins

Senior Environmental Advisor

Flood Management Division



# DEFRA POLICY AIM

To reduce risks to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding and coastal erosion - under review



# Content

- Summary of what SMPs aim to do
- What they have achieved
  - what needs improving
- Summarise main changes in SMP2 guidance
- Challenges for the future - especially environmental



# THE AIM OF AN SMP



“a document that provides a large scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal processes and presents a policy framework to reduce these risks to people and the developed, historic and natural environment in a sustainable manner”

# KEY OBJECTIVES OF AN SMP

- Encourage a co-ordinated approach to shoreline management through consultation
- Develop an understanding of coastal processes and their effect on the shoreline
- To identify and assess the risks and impacts of assets likely to be influenced by coastal change
- Establish long-term policies that will form a coherent management plan for the area
- Maintain and where possible enhance the natural environment
- Establish a co-ordinated approach with the statutory planning system.

# What does this mean in practice?

- An SMP considers :
  - where defences should be retained to protect property/environmental assets
    - how valuable are the assets?
  - coastal processes and their impact on our ability to continue to protect
    - is it an accreting or erosive environment?
  - sustainability/financial burden associated with maintaining defences
    - how costly is it likely to be to defend and is this economically justified?
  - If not justified, are there sensible alternative options such as do nothing (abandon) or managed realignment?

# How well have SMPs performed?

- 1st generation SMPs complete for England and Wales
- raised awareness of coastal erosion/flooding issues
- hold the line is the preferred option almost everywhere!
  - Economics/sustainability considerations overridden by desire to protect everything!
- Environmental issues poorly covered
  - input from English Nature/NGOs often poor

# SO WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

- We have come a long way in 10 years.
- We are working better with natural processes for the first time in many locations.
- We are not building *ad-hoc* concrete defences any more.
- We are thinking about long-term sustainable options.

# Lessons learnt from 1st generation SMPs

- MAFF review published 2000
- Guidance for preparing 2nd generation SMPs 2001
  - some key lessons learnt were:
    - that SMP1 policy may not be realistic for the future
    - need to be aware of long-term implications
    - may need to identify a more sustainable policy for future
    - consultation needs to be more efficient and focussed
    - estuaries should be covered
    - environmental issues need to be more carefully considered



# SMP PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

## Now in preparation, based on 3 Pilots

- Provides a 'how to' manual for SMP production.
- Define the steps required to produce SMP and how to most efficiently and effectively undertake them.
- Utilise new information and techniques available since SMP 1.
- Define a structure for the SMP output.

# Revised list of policy options

- Hold the existing defence line - maintain or improve standard of protection
  - advance the line - land reclamation for ports etc.
  - managed realignment - to more sustainable position
  - no active intervention - no investment and no activity
- 
- note that limited intervention no longer recognised as separate option

# SMP OUTPUTS

## SMP2s will:

- Provide clear decisions and policies for sustainable shoreline management.
- Identify the uncertainties and risks associated with the decisions made.
- Appraise longer term shoreline policies.
- Give consistent application of the information and research that exists since first SMP was completed.
- Use approaches more familiar to planners and environmentalists so that better linkages can be made to other Plans.

# Old Harry Rocks Purbeck



# A Till Cliff - Withernsea



# A Victorian Sea Wall - Blackpool



# High Energy Environment - Scarborough



# Low Lying Area - Happisburgh to Winterton



# Dee Salt Marshes



# Privately owned defences



# SMPs - the next step?

- Extend period under consideration to 100 years
- take account of most up-to-date information - includes:
  - FutureCoast - coastal process information for whole coast at same standard/detail
  - Coastal Habitat Management Plans (CHaMPs) -
    - about 10 Natura 2000 site areas
    - ensure compliance with Habitats Regulations

# Considering the future

- Policy to be evaluated for three different time periods:
  - 0-20 years
  - 20-50 years
  - 50-100 years
- Example:
  - hold the line sustainable for 20 years but not for 100 years due to sea level rise etc.
  - hence: hold the line (0-20); managed realignment (20-50 years); hold the (new) line (50-100 years)

# Particular challenges in SMP2

- Persuade people that the sea cannot be stopped!
  - More focussed consultation
- Ensure compliance with Habitats and Birds Directives - incorporate findings of CHaMPs - more in a minute
- Incorporate Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Identify realistic policies - not always hold the line

# SMP nature conservation issues

- Ongoing habitat losses
  - 100 hectares of saltmarsh/year
  - intertidal Natura 2000 sites and SSSI favourable condition PSA target
- Freshwater habitats on the coast
  - sustainable - if not recreate
- Defra/Environment Agency committed to replacement
  - High Level/Corporate targets
  - FM Habitat Creation Programmes required

# CONCLUSIONS

- We have started to adapt the way in which we think long-term on the coast.
- Strategic framework, such as SMPs/Coastal Strategies has allowed us to do this.
- Scientific tools, such as Futurecoast and CHaMPs, are giving us the basis on which to start taking long-term decisions with confidence.
- We need to encourage the use of these tools to explain why long-term policies are needed for the coast.

# Summary

- 1st generation SMPs raised profile and provide starting point - but often unsustainable policy
- 2nd generation must be more realistic, and must take much more account of environmental issues
- approach to consultation will important