

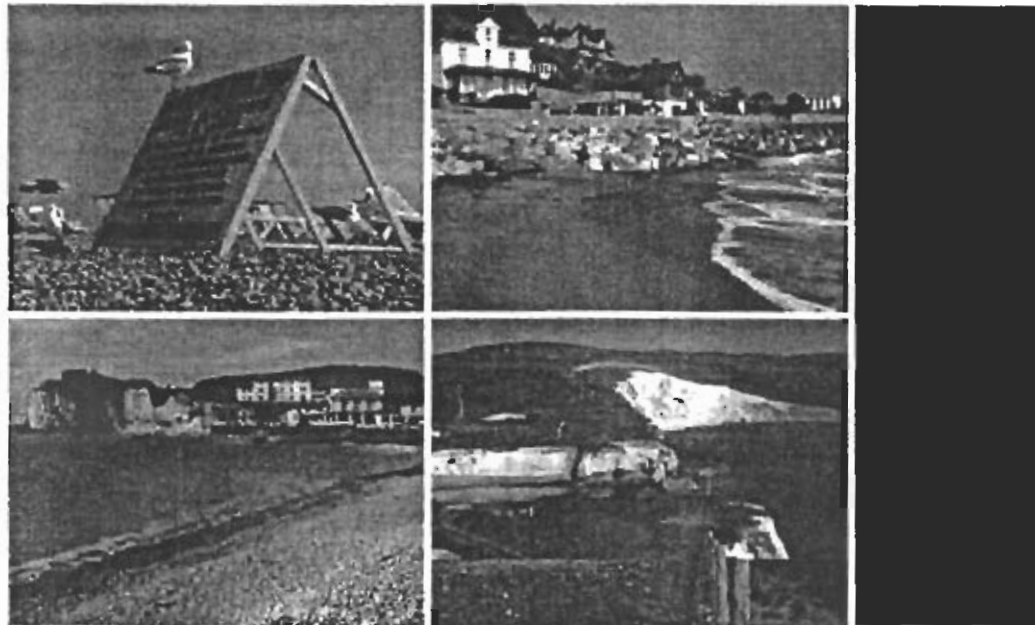


Government Office for the South East of England

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# South East Region Coastal Study in the context of Climate Change Adaptation

Final Report  
June 2009



Images: GOSE Library

is in relation to funding and policy making for regeneration and planning (CLG's responsibility) and flood and coastal erosion (Defra);

- Engagement of the regional level and particularly the regional planning body on coastal issues has not been continuous and represents a key gap;

#### **Lack of integration of policies affecting the coast**

- There is no single overarching policy for the coast so local authorities which concentrate most of the responsibilities on the ground are faced with the task of integrating a variety of policy objectives and timescales;
- The lack of integration between spatial planning and coastal erosion and flood risk policies is a key cause of tensions on the ground. An example of this is that Defra's flood and coastal erosion policy protects existing assets and properties and does not take into account future growth or regeneration. CLG and regional planning allocations, growth points and other policies do not currently take into account flood and coastal defence costs;
- Two potential avenues for resolving these conflicts were highlighted in stakeholders comments to this report:
  - The Strategic level: given the need to reconcile short term interests (e.g. regeneration) with long term issues (e.g. erosion or climate change), the strategic level was highlighted as the most appropriate to resolve policy tensions on the ground. As part of this, it was suggested that Defra and CLG should have more high level discussions about coastal issues.
  - The Local / Development level: it was suggested that decisions made by the Planning Inspector on individual planning applications and the application of current planning policy on flood risk and development are practical ways to reconcile planning and coastal defence policies.

#### **Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs)**

- The need to link and integrate SMP policies with spatial planning is a key theme that emerged through our research. One reason for this could be that the SMP review is currently taking place (to be completed by March 2010). It was suggested that in order for SMP and spatial policies to be better integrated, the SMPs should become part of the evidence base for spatial plans.

#### **Issues with protected sites**

- The statutory duty to protect habitats but not people and the economy is a key cause of conflict on the ground. This system is also fairly inflexible in accommodating new challenges such as coastal and climate change; In addition, one of the key related issues for the SE is the impacts of coastal squeeze and climate change on designated sites.

#### **Impact of new policies**

- New and emerging policies that promote integration (e.g. the Marine Bill) may bring a new layer of complexity to the existing framework. In particular, the introduction of a new marine organisation may lead to further 'disintegration' of coastal management rather than the desired integration.
- In addition, emerging policies such as the Marine Bill and the Floods and Water Bill will place increasing responsibilities on local authorities.

## Executive Summary

The aim of this study was to address the gap in knowledge of the range of activities that are currently being undertaken on the coast in the South East Region. This gap needs to be addressed before defining the most appropriate course of action for the Region. Specific objectives of the study were to provide:

1. A list of **key stakeholders** working on the coastal agenda in the South East Region
2. An analysis of **gaps and overlaps in roles and responsibilities** of the key public sector bodies in the South East coast
3. An analysis of the **current policy framework** for the South East coast and the identification of **national policies potentially causing conflicts on the ground**
4. An **Impact analysis** of three key policies:
  - South East Plan
  - Draft Marine Bill
  - Access to the coast (note: part of the Marine Bill but considered separately)

The project was undertaken through document and web page review, stakeholder analysis, policy and impact analysis, stakeholder interviews a survey of County and Unitary Authorities in the SE Coast, attendance to relevant events and consultation with GOSE and other key stakeholders working on the South East coastal agenda.

The study provided a summary of the key institutional, policy and funding issues that affect the South East coast and include:

### **Institutional Issues**

- Institutional issues include both overlaps and gaps in terms of responsibilities and attached funding and also internal institutional issues such as lack of skills and resources to address coastal issues.
- It could be argued that the current institutional framework for coastal areas is designed to fail as it comprises:
  - Organisations which control the funding for coastal erosion and flood risk management (the Environment Agency, EA);
  - Organisations that make key decisions in coastal areas (particularly Local Authorities) may not have access to funding for coastal defence and have other conflicting priorities. Local authorities concentrate many responsibilities in term of costal management but funding and strategic overview resides with the EA;
  - A statutory duty to protect habitats but only permissive powers to protect communities and assets;
- There is a clear separation in roles and responsibilities between Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which cascade down the institutional framework and can cause tensions on the ground. In particular this