

COASTAL STRATEGIC OVERVIEW – WHAT IT MEANS IN PRACTICE?

Brief History

- Making Space for Water First Government response in March 2005 said that EA would have a “strategic overview for all flood and coastal erosion risk management”;
- Full public consultation was undertaken in Summer 2006;
- Ian Pearson announced the approach that the strategic overview on the Coast would take in June 2007 and a news release was published;
- Defra, Environment Agency and Local Government officials have worked up the detailed implementation plan;
- Inland flooding proposals being developed separately;

The main items of the Coastal Strategic Overview Implementation Plan being delivered are:

The Governance Strand

- *Creation of fewer, bigger and more strategic Coastal Groups, and formalises Coastal Group relationships with Regional Flood Defence Committees* – Coastal Groups are the body through which groups of local authorities come together to plan and deliver coastal works on the ground. The current coastal groups have adopted different roles and approaches. We therefore plan to formalise their arrangements, and make sure, through stronger relationships with the Environment Agency and the Regional Flood Defence Committees, that they are fully able to contribute to effective management of sea flooding and coastal erosion risk management in their areas.
- *Extending the role of Regional Flood Defence Committees to include coastal erosion risk management* – Regional Flood Defence Committees provide local democratic input into inland and sea flooding decisions by the Environment Agency across the country. This move will bring coastal erosion into the same framework as inland and sea flooding.

Legislation

- *Making minor changes to primary legislation to allow effective management of sea flooding and coastal erosion risk management* – Currently the legislation allows a division of responsibilities between the Environment Agency (flooding responsibilities) and local authorities (coastal erosion and some flooding responsibilities) but doesn't allow robust decisions to be taken to achieve the best value for money. The changes will include allowing the Environment Agency to undertake Coastal erosion works which are currently beyond their remit. By allowing this, and through giving the EA a supervisory duty over coastal erosion, the EA will be in a position to ensure that the most deserving schemes across the country are taken forward.

Shoreline Management Plans

- *Giving the Environment Agency a strategic oversight for all SMP production and quality controlling them* – allows us to ensure that consistently strong Shoreline Management Plans are produced around the coastline which will help to deliver truly strategic and sustainable works over a whole length of coastline, and identification of risk on a nationally consistent basis.

Delivery of Coastal Works

- *Defra delegates to the Environment Agency responsibility for identifying, prioritising, funding and delivering sea flooding and coastal erosion works* – this will create a seamless and joined up approach with clearer responsibilities. Although some local authorities are currently very active and able in getting works delivered, others are much less able to do so. By giving the EA a role across the whole country for ensuring more robust identification, implementation and long-term management of flood and coastal erosion risk management works, we can ensure that Government priorities are met and available funding is spent to best effect.
- *Environment Agency take overall responsibility for all sea flooding risk management decisions* – currently both the EA and local authorities have this responsibility, which creates a patchwork approach and a lack of clarity for accountability. This move will ensure one body is accountable for decision making for all sea flooding, whilst still allowing local authorities to deliver the works on the ground.
- *Production of Coastal Responsibility Maps* – once produced, these maps will be made available to the public and will clearly demonstrate who is the responsible authority for delivering flood and coastal erosion risk management on each stretch of coastline.